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GOD AT WORK
A STUDY OF THE SUPERNATURAL

GOD AT WORK

A Study of The Supernatural

By

William Adams Brown, Ph.D., D.D.

“My Father worketh *even until now*,
and I work.”—John 5:17 (R. V.)

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A

TO
THE MEMORY
REVERED AND BELOVED
OF
BARON FRIEDRICH VON HÜGEL
SCHOLAR AND SAINT
WHO
HAVING PASSED FROM THE LIFE HERE
TO LIFE MORE ABUNDANT
STILL SPEAKS TO US
OF THE REALITIES THAT OUTLAST DEATH
AND SO SPEAKING
MAKES IT EASIER FOR US TO REALIZE
THAT ALL TRUE LIFE IS
LIFE ETERNAL

PREFACE

Characteristic of our time is an enhanced sense of the need and of the possibility of a more vital personal religion. This appears not only in academic circles, in the keen interest aroused by the theology of Karl Barth, but in more popular movements like the Anglo-Catholic revival, the First Century Christian Fellowship, and the Kingdom of God Movement in Japan. I believe that it is most important that those who are engaged in different phases of this revival should understand and sympathize with one another. I have therefore attempted in this book, a reinterpretation of the supernatural factor in religion, not from the abstract and theoretical viewpoint which has been controlling in many recent discussions of the subject, but in its bearing upon the personal religious life. I believe that all these different movements are parts of one great movement in which God is recalling our generation to himself; and that the future of the Church, if not of civilization itself, will depend upon our rediscovery, in the midst of the confusion and heartbreak of our time, of the living God at work. The theoretical issues raised by supernatural religion are important, but I believe they can be rightly approached, and their true significance

correctly perceived, only when they are seen in their bearing upon personal religion. For this reason I have passed over many interesting questions suggested by the experiences which I have described, in order to concentrate attention upon points of crucial importance.

I have chosen my illustrations chiefly from contemporary Protestantism, not because there is not much to be learned from the experience of Roman Catholics, but because the setting in which these experiences are found is likely to be less familiar to most of my readers. Where the opportunity has offered, I have tried to do justice to the Catholic experience and point of view. But this has not been the main purpose of my book. For that I may find opportunity in another volume.

So far as I have received help from printed sources I have expressed my acknowledgment at the appropriate place. To the many friends who have helped me in more informal ways by sharing their personal experiences, I can make only this general acknowledgment. It is simple truth to say that without their help, this book could not have been written.

In parts of the book I have used material drawn from lectures, delivered at Yale University in 1932, on the Nathaniel W. Taylor Foundation of the Yale Divinity School. For the opportunity afforded me by

the Yale Divinity School to develop my thought in the sympathetic atmosphere thus provided, I wish to express my sincere thanks.

To the editors of the *Harvard Divinity Quarterly*, I owe special thanks for permission to use in chapters V and X parts of a lecture delivered at Harvard University on the Dudleian Foundation, entitled "The Permanent Significance of Miracle for Religion."

I wish to thank my friend and former student, Rev. Henry Smith Leiper, for help with the proofs, and my colleagues, Professors Henry Pitney Van Dusen and Erdman Harris, for suggestions as to the bibliography. To my secretary, Miss Maude M. Dolan, my thanks are due for making the index.

WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN.

LONDON, 1933.

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GOD AT WORK

PART I

LANDMARKS

CHAPTER I

WHY RELIGION STANDS OR FALLS WITH THE SUPERNATURAL

1. The Place of the Supernatural in Religion.
2. What It Means to Believe in the Supernatural.
3. Aim of the Present Study.

1. THE PLACE OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN RELIGION

I have long wanted to write a book about the ways by which God makes his presence known in personal religion. These experiences are often described as supernatural and the word calls attention to characteristics of the religious experience which are of great and, as I believe, of permanent significance. Yet for reasons presently to be explained, the term "supernatural" has acquired associations which make it difficult to secure an unbiased consideration for the reality for which the word stands.

More years ago than I care to remember I delivered at Harvard University a lecture with the title "The Permanent Significance of Miracle for Religion."¹ Some days before the lecture was due I submitted it to one of my colleagues² for criticism. He returned it with the following comment: "On the whole I liked the lecture very well; but you have omitted the most significant word. The title should read 'The *Lack* of Permanent Significance of Miracle for Religion.'"

Professor Coe was only saying aloud what many of my fellow-teachers were thinking, and for that matter still think. A short time ago a thoughtful minister of my acquaintance, having been told that I was planning a book on the supernatural, said to

¹ The Dudleian Lecture for 1915, printed in *The Harvard Theological Review* for July, 1915.

² Professor George A. Coe.

me, "I hear that you are writing a history of superstition." The sentence accurately reflects the impression produced by the word "supernatural" in respectable academic circles. To speak of the supernatural to a college professor is to suggest to his mind a type of thought and of experience that the world has definitely outgrown. For by the supernatural he means the miraculous, and by the miraculous the magical.³ Miracles, he will tell us, do not happen. If they did we could not prove them. If we could prove them they would have no intellectual or moral significance for us. Our world, the only world we know or can know, is limited to the facts, experiences, and relationships which science studies and which we sum up under the comprehensive term "nature." In the world which science makes known to us, there can be no place for the supernatural.

Yet the supernatural is the basic conception of religion. And it is the basic conception because it directs our attention to the central fact. That fact is the living God at work. The supernatural is the religious man's name for his experience of the Divine in its most direct and intimate form. Belief in the possibility of such firsthand experience is the conviction which gives dynamic to the historic religions. Every major faith assumes the existence of a reality, not completely controllable by the methods of exact science, to which man looks up in worship and with which he may have communion for his good. And what faith assumes, experience verifies. The prophets

³ On the meaning of magic, *cf.* Chap. VI, pp. 101 ff.

and saints of all the religions have been vividly conscious that in concrete experiences, definitely dateable, God has spoken to them in recognizable ways. Without this belief and this experience, no one of the great classics of religion would have had its birth. We should have had no Vedas, no Koran, no Bible. St. Augustine would not have written his *Confessions* or à Kempis his *Imitation of Christ*, or Dante his *Divine Comedy*, or Milton his *Paradise Lost*, or Bunyan his *Pilgrim's Progress*. A subject which has had such a history and possesses such associations must have a perennial interest.

2. WHAT IT MEANS TO BELIEVE IN THE SUPERNATURAL

The supernatural has an interest for the mind, since it brings us face to face with the central problem of philosophy, the problem of the norms which give unity and direction to our thinking. But it has an even greater interest for daily life. To believe in the supernatural, I repeat, means *to believe in a God at work*. It means to be convinced that, beyond the realm of relativity and finiteness of which alone physical science is cognizant, there exists an ultimate good which sets the standard for all our striving and in which we may find the satisfaction of our deepest desire. But it means more than this. It means that God is making himself known to us in definite and recognizable ways. To believe in the supernatural, as that belief has been held by those in whom the

love of God has become a controlling principle and passion, is to be aware that things happen, partly in the world without, partly in the world within, which, lifting us above our ordinary horizon and reinforcing our limited powers, make us immediately aware of the divine presence and enlighten us as to the divine purpose for us and for our world.

For those who hold this faith the world has become a different place. It is no longer possible for them to be satisfied with the conventional, self-centred life which most people are living. For they have been introduced to a life far more worthy and satisfying; one that assures to its possessor the things after which all true men aspire—insight, renewal, freedom, joy. It is the life after which the saints have striven and which many of them have attained. And having once tasted this new life, one can never be contented with the old.

The fact of God, the assurance of God's self-communication in revelation and redemption, the possibility of sainthood: these are the glorious realities to which we are introduced when we touch the supernatural. These realities we shall explore in this book.

The fact of God! To believe in the reality of the supernatural is not simply to assert something about oneself, but about the nature of things. It is to discover in the flux of chance and change something splendid and enduring which lifts us above ourselves and introduces us into a wonderful new world. The longing, poignantly expressed in much of our contemporary literature, for a firm footing in enduring

reality finds an answer in the religious man's discovery of God.

And yet discovery is not quite the word. *Response* comes closer to expressing what happens to a man when he awakens to religion. Discovery is the scientist's word. But religion is more than science. Religion is love. To be religious means to fall in love with that which is most excellent—a love possible only because the loved object has taken the initiative. Religion, I repeat, is response. It is man's answer to God's approach.

The goal of religion is sainthood. The word "saint" has become almost as repellent to our generation as the word "supernatural." It suggests solemn figures in cathedral windows with bare feet, long beards, and stiff halos, as remote from the ideals which stir the enthusiasm of our contemporaries as anything that can well be imagined. But in fact the saint is simply the man who takes his life seriously and is willing to be satisfied with nothing less than the best. To aspire after sainthood is to take perfection for one's goal.

This, then, is what the religious man means when he says that he believes in the supernatural. It is his way of saying that the most excellent life is possible because a supreme excellence exists to make it possible. It is the faith of one who seeks perfection.

3. AIM OF THE PRESENT STUDY

As we study this faith in the lives of those who have embraced it, we shall find ourselves asking such questions as these:

What is the new life to which vital religion introduces us? How is it different from the life of convention which most of us are living? How does it begin, and why does it so often take the form of crisis? Why, if it be the life for which we are all meant, does it seem strange; and how is its strangeness to be explained?

What is the reality with which this life brings us into touch? Who and what is God, and what is his relation to nature? In what sense can we know God? In what sense does he transcend our knowledge? What meanings does faith find in God, and what is their relation to the ultimate mystery by which we are encompassed?

What are the ways in which God manifests himself to man? Where do we find traces of his presence in nature and in history? What part is played in his revelation by the exceptional events and experiences faith calls miracles; what part by the great personalities to whom the historic religions trace their origin; by the sacred books which record their teaching and the sacred institutions which perpetuate their influence? What, in particular, is the contribution of Christianity to our experience of the supernatural? What place does Jesus hold among the prophets and saints of mankind?

Above all, what can we do to make this study bear practical fruit in life? How can we be sure that in our religious experience it is really God with whom we have to do? Among the many alleged revelations that claim to come from him, how can we distinguish

the true from the false; and when we have gained a clue, what can we do to cultivate the supernatural life in ourselves? What are the limits within which that life is possible in the individual and in society, and what can our present experience tell us of greater possibilities still in store for us and for our race?

These questions can no longer be dismissed as of academic interest only, although it is true that among philosophers and men of science also we find a renewal of interest in the supernatural.⁴ The response accorded to Professor Otto's book on "The Holy," in which he has emphasized the element of mystery in the religious experience;⁵ the crowds that throng the lecture room of Professor Karl Barth⁶ as he imparts to his students his discovery of God, cannot be accounted for wholly by the widespread interest in the theoretical questions raised by the psychology of religion. They are due even more to the fact that the questions which these professors discuss have ceased to be merely theoretical. They believe, and many of their readers and hearers believe, that they have had actual experiences with the Divine. God, once but a name, has become for them a presence and the supernatural, a living reality.

⁴ A notable illustration is the recent Gifford lectures by Professor Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralists* (London, 1930). Cf. especially vol. II, p. 157: "Though religion in our sense of the word is the active recognition of the supernatural and nothing else."

Cf. also J. Oman, *The Natural and the Supernatural* (Cambridge, 1931), p. 72: "The supernatural must be inquired into, like the natural, as a world in which we live and move and have our being, if it is to be inquired into with profit."

⁵ *The Idea of the Holy*. English translation by J. W. Harvey (Oxford, 1923).

⁶ Professor of Theology in the University of Bonn.

This new interest is the justification of the present study. There are books on the supernatural, and to spare; but most of them have been written on premises which many of our contemporaries no longer share and deal with phases of the subject which have lost their interest. Where this is not the case, the method of approach is often so technical as to afford plain people little help in their practical problems. There seems to be room for a book which will try to look with fresh eyes upon this ancient theme and to describe what it sees in the language of today. Such a book must be critical, but it need not be sceptical. When we have learned all that psychology can teach us about the mechanism of our mental processes and all that history can tell us about the story of religion in the past, we are brought at last to an encompassing mystery, on the right adjustment to which the success or failure of our lives depends. Religion is a way in which from time immemorial men have entered into practical relationship with this encompassing mystery and have been uplifted and transformed thereby. Let us be scientific by all means, as we study what happens to us in religion; but let us never forget that we are not simply scientists, interested in explanation, but plain men and women, each with a life to live and with only a few short years for discovery, for achievement, and for happiness. Our first interest in this book will be to find, if possible, a clue to the good life.

CHAPTER II

THE SUPERNATURAL IN CONTRAST TO NATURE

1. On the Uses of Definition.
2. Ways in Which We May Think of Nature.
3. Why We Believe in the Existence of Nature.
4. How This Belief Affects Our View of the Supernatural.
5. Reasons for Being Interested in the Supernatural.

1. ON THE USES OF DEFINITION

This is to be a chapter of definitions, and no sensible author can expect his readers to hail the prospect of such a chapter with enthusiasm. Nevertheless definitions have their uses and in dealing with a difficult theme like ours some preliminary distinctions are indispensable. A little patience at the outset may save confusion and misunderstanding hereafter. Since our primary purpose is practical, there is all the more need of avoiding by-paths which lead us nowhere. Even Abbé Dimnet, who, of all recent writers on the religious life, has carried simplification farthest, finds it necessary to begin his latest book on *What We Live By*¹ with metaphysical definitions which make a severe tax on the attention of the reader.

So I do not apologize for devoting the present chapter to definitions. I will promise to make it as short as I can; but some things must be cleared up at the start if we are to make progress. In structures of the mind, as in houses built of brick and stone, good tools are time-savers. Words are the tools of the mind and if we allow them to grow rusty or dull they will fail us when we need them.

Such a useful but rusty tool is the word supernatural. In spite of the definite meaning given to it in many contemporary scientific books, it is an am-

¹ New York, 1932.

biguous term and in the course of its history has had many meanings and shades of meaning. Some of these have had their day. Others are of continuing, indeed it may prove, of permanent significance. Let us see if we can distinguish that which is transient in the word from that which is lasting.²

The word "supernatural" itself would seem to suggest a method. It points to a contrast between nature and the supernatural. Since the supernatural has meaning only as contrasted with nature, let us first be clear just what we mean by nature and then we shall be in a position to define the supernatural.

2. WAYS IN WHICH WE MAY THINK OF NATURE

Like all words that point us to reality, "nature" is an ambiguous term. Not only has its meaning varied

² One technical distinction meets us at the outset. It is between the use of "supernatural" as an adjective and its use as a noun. As an adjective the word "supernatural" denotes certain qualities which strike us as different from the qualities denoted by the term "natural." As a noun it refers to objects that possess these different qualities or are possessed by them.

This is an obvious distinction no doubt, but it is far-reaching in its consequences, for it carries us from the domain of psychology into the domain of metaphysics. When we speak of qualities we speak as psychologists. We say such and such an object strikes us as having such and such characteristics—blue or red, or large or small, as the case may be. The recital of these qualities enables us to put the objects that possess them in a class by themselves and so to take the first step in the journey of science. But when we pass from the adjective to the noun, we cease to be psychologists and become metaphysicians. We make certain assertions about reality. We say that such and such an object possesses these qualities. When we have found out what they are, we have learned something about the reality they reveal.

The importance of this distinction between the adjective and the noun has been pointed out by Baron von Hügel in his book *Eternal Life* (Edinburgh, 1912), which at many points traverses the ground covered in the present essay. "Eternal Life," he there remarks—

with the increase of our knowledge, but at any period we study we find that it has varying senses according to the particular aspect of reality which it is used to designate.

In the first place we may understand by nature the physical universe, taking that term in the broadest sense to denote all that aspect of reality which has location in space and admits of measurement by tests which are accessible to the senses. This is Whitehead's definition of nature. "Nature," he tells us, "is that which we observe in perception through the senses."³ In contrast to this, the supernatural becomes the spiritual. It means the inner world of con- and the words could be transferred almost without change to our subject of the supernatural—"is not an ultimate cause, a self-subsisting entity which (accidentally or necessarily) evolves a living subject or subjects, but it is simply the effect, the action of a living Reality, or the effect, the interaction of several such realities. Hence Eternal Life is no substitute for either God or man; but it is the activity, the effect of God, or of man, or of both" (pp. 282, 283). In like manner we may say of the supernatural that it is not a reality independent of God, but the effect produced by the action of God upon man, or of men who have been the recipients of God's activity.

This distinction between the adjective and the noun "supernatural" will meet us often in the chapters that follow. When we ask what the supernatural life is like, we shall be using the word in the first sense. When we ask in whom the supernatural life is realized, we shall be using the word in the second sense.

But of itself this distinction carries us only a little way, for there are many different qualities which men have described as supernatural and many different objects to which man has ascribed deity. We shall need other tests if we are to distinguish rightly between what is permanent in the idea of the supernatural and what is transient.

³ Cf. *The Concept of Nature* (Cambridge, 1920): "In this sense-perception we are aware of something which is not thought and which is self-contained for thought. This property of being self-contained for thought lies at the basis of natural science. It seems that nature can be thought of as a closed system whose mutual relations do not require the expression of the fact that they are thought about" (p. 3).

sciousness, of thought, and of appreciation which is known to us only through introspection. Personality in this sense is supernatural, and to say of God that he is supernatural is to say that, whatever else he may be, he is like us in being self-conscious and self-determining spirit.

Another possible meaning of nature is the predictable. This is the favorite definition of the scientist. I say favorite, for men of science are not always consistent in their use of the term. Nature so understood denotes that aspect of the world of reality which acts in uniform ways and can be counted on to repeat itself. The natural is the scientist's name for the uniform, the dependable, the calculable. It furnishes their object of study to the exact sciences—mathematics, physics, chemistry. Nature in this sense need not be confined, however, to the physical sciences, but may include all that side of man's conscious life which admits of exact measurement and so makes possible prediction. When so expanded the natural becomes the rational.⁴ It is the inwardly determined and so far forth the intelligible. So far as there is in man something that defies measurement, something incalculable, mysterious, it falls outside

⁴ We use rational here in the narrower of the two meanings assigned to reason by Whitehead—the reason of science as distinct from the reason of philosophy. Reason in this narrower sense denotes the sum total of the conclusions which, verified by repeated experiment, make prediction possible and so “render purpose effective,” as distinct from that activity of mind which “drawn forward by the faith that all particular fact is understandable as illustrating the general principles of its own nature and of its status among other particular facts . . . seeks with disinterested curiosity an understanding of the world.” Whitehead, A. N., *Three Lectures on Reason* (Princeton, 1929), p. 29.

of nature and becomes supernatural. In contrast to this second meaning of nature, the supernatural is the novel, the unpredictable, the creative.

But there is a third possible meaning, even more basic and familiar. We may mean by nature the actual, as distinct from the desirable or the possible, what is in contrast to what should be. When we speak so of nature we have in mind the totality of our known world as it is actually given to us in experience, with all its limitations and imperfections. Nature, however vast in extent and incalculable in operation, is for us a definite entity with fixed limitations and relationships. Judged by our standards of what is admirable and desirable, it is a very imperfect and unsatisfactory reality. It is a reality conditioned and finite in extent, but even more in quality. This world is the home of suffering, of failure, and of sin. The supernatural in contrast to the actual becomes the ideal, the normative, the perfect, in a word the absolute.

These three meanings, crossing and recrossing in the history of thought, combine in differing and often perplexing ways; and the variation of our interest, as it shifts from one to another, goes far to explain the confusion in which the use of the term supernatural involves us.

But we have not completely accounted for our difficulty when we have called attention to these different meanings of the term "nature," for each of them has had its own independent history and has become in the course of that history the parent of new con-

fusions. As our acquaintance with nature increases and our experience of her working is enlarged, we accumulate a fund of knowledge which was not possessed by our predecessors. This knowledge is embodied in formulæ which, being themselves partial and incomplete, are continually being corrected or superseded by the more accurate statements of succeeding generations. Galileo follows Ptolemy; and Newton, Galileo; and Einstein, Newton; and with the advent of each new discoverer our thought of nature alters correspondingly.

Now let us suppose that at some stage in this process of investigation and explanation some one way of conceiving of the physical universe and defining its laws had come to be accepted as the final and authoritative way. Let us suppose that we had been told from our earliest childhood that unless we thought of nature in this way we could have no practical experience of nature in our daily life. When at some later time we came to see, as a result of the new knowledge brought to us by science, that our early way of thinking about nature was no longer tenable, would it not be natural for us to conclude that the *experiences* which we supposed ourselves to have had with nature were deceptive and that we were dealing not with objective and irreducible facts but with pictures in our own minds. This is the way in which some of the greatest philosophers have actually thought of nature and the fact that they have found it possible so to think of familiar and easily accessible reality makes it easy to understand why the

same thing has happened in the case of the supernatural, and why many of our contemporaries, finding themselves no longer able to accept the traditional theory about it, have been led to discredit the experience which gave rise to the theory.

3. WHY WE BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF NATURE 4

Why then is it that, in spite of these difficulties and confusions, we are sure that in dealing with nature we are confronted with something objectively real and not simply with a construct of our own mind? It is because of certain recurrent experiences which we share with our predecessors of remotest antiquity.

Let us take the simplest meaning of nature—that with which all science begins. Why do we believe that there is a physical universe, antecedent to and independent of our subjective impressions of it?

We believe that there is such a universe because of certain recurrent experiences of form and color, location and resistance, which persist through all our changing explanations of them and are common to men at every stage of intellectual insight and cultural development. Argument for argument, it is as easy to contend with Berkeley and the more consistent idealistic philosophers that physical nature exists only in our subjective apprehension of it as to affirm a similar subjectivity of the soul or of God. Yet the sober commonsense of mankind refuses to accept this explanation and the greatest scientists as truly

as the simplest laymen continue to believe in the existence of the physical universe as an act of natural piety.

Or let us think of nature as the predictable. Why do we believe that there is an order of nature which makes it possible, within limits, to plan confidently for the future? Again because of certain recurrent experiences which are common to us with our remotest ancestors. For them as for us day succeeded night in orderly succession; for them as for us the sun rose in the east and set in the west; for them as for us the seasons followed one another in inevitable sequence, spring bringing its vernal winds and swelling buds, summer its lengthening days and burning heat, autumn its ripening fruit and withering leaves, winter its icy blasts and blanketing snow;⁵ while over all, in the arching heavens, for them as for us, the moon passed through her successive phases and the stars pursued their invariable courses. So, in spite of the realm of uncertainty and mystery by which they felt themselves ceaselessly surrounded, our primitive kinsfolk came to believe, as all their successors have believed, in a realm of order by which they could reckon and on which they could count.

When we turn to the last of the three meanings of nature, to the actual as contrasted with the ideal, we are brought back again to recurrent experiences. How many proud hopes have suffered shipwreck

⁵ The fact that the times for summer and winter do not everywhere synchronize; that degrees of heat and cold vary; and that in some parts of the world rain takes the place of snow, or even (as in Aden) is often lacking altogether, does not affect the general principle.

upon the rock of some stubborn and inexorable fact! How many generous ambitions have been betrayed by some secret flaw of the human spirit! How easy to conclude, with the sage who has shared with us his disillusionment in the Book of Ecclesiastes, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

Such experiences, persisting across all changes of philosophical interpretation and scientific discovery, furnish the basis for our conviction of the existence of the reality we call nature—a reality known to us at first-hand as something given; antecedent to and independent of our varying speculations as to its origin, its explanation, and its laws.

It is not otherwise with the supernatural. At the basis of all conflicting theories, as of the corresponding theories of nature, there is a residuum of familiar and unquestioned fact. And it is with this residuum that we must begin if we wish to understand what is really at stake in the discussion of supernatural religion.

4. HOW THIS BELIEF AFFECTS OUR VIEW OF THE SUPERNATURAL

We begin, then, by asking what there is in man's recurring experience which leads him to believe in the supernatural. And we find, as with the corresponding experiences of nature, that, in respect to each of the three major meanings that we have distinguished—the spiritual, the creative, the perfect—our conviction is due to the persistence of certain

recurrent phenomena which outlast our changing theories and constrain us to believe in a reality which has the qualities denoted by these words.

We believe in the supernatural in the sense of the spiritual because we find in ourselves and in the persons with whom we have to do qualities which go beyond the physical—things like consciousness and will and the capacity for appreciation. We believe in the supernatural in the sense of the creative because we discover in ourselves and in the universe without us happenings which we cannot completely account for by their antecedents and which impress us as novel and original. We believe in the supernatural in the sense of the perfect because we are never satisfied with the relative and the finite, which is all that the immediate present offers us, and are continually judging ourselves and other persons by norms which transcend present attainment and point the way to ultimate perfection. Having such experiences and passing such judgments year after year and age after age, we find it as impossible to conclude that this experience of ours is purely subjective and self-created as we find it impossible to make a similar assumption concerning the parallel experiences through which physical nature reveals its presence. As truly and in the same way as we find nature given, we find the supernatural given and the only question open to us is how we shall think in detail of the reality to which its presence witnesses.

To sum up, the supernatural as contrasted with nature is the spiritual, the creative, the perfect. Com-

binning these three qualities in a single adjective, we get the sacred or the divine. Interpreting them as characteristics of the ideal object which sets the standard for our life, we get the transcendent reality faith calls God.

It is only with the last of these three meanings—the ideal or the worshipful—that we reach the supernatural in the religious sense. Personality is supernatural, but it is not necessarily admirable. Creativity, mysterious and challenging though it be, has no necessary religious connotation. From the discovery of creativity in ourselves or in others we may be led to infer the existence of a greater than we in which this quality is present in supreme degree. But even this inference stops short of religion. It is only when we recognize in this greater reality something which deserves our reverence that religion is born. To believe in the supernatural in the religious sense is to express one's faith that there exists in fact a supreme being with which man has to do and that the will of that being, however conceived and expressed, is the final standard to which all that is finite must ultimately conform.⁶

⁶ I use the word "supreme" rather than the more technical word "absolute" partly because it is a simpler, less philosophical term, partly to call attention to the fact that man's experience of the supernatural in this sense antedates the rise of a unified worldview. In all the greater religions the supernatural is identified with the absolute of philosophy. As the ultimate reality it is believed to be the final explanation and sufficient cause of all that is; but in earlier stages of man's experience it is enough that the supernatural should be identified with the highest reality that is known. The thing that concerns us here is that in whatever world man is living the supernatural should be recognized as supreme. God is something to which man looks up.

5. REASONS FOR BEING INTERESTED IN THE SUPERNATURAL

This analysis will help us to understand the prejudice which until recently attached to the conception of the supernatural in scientific circles. This prejudice was due in no small measure to failure to distinguish between the different meanings of the word. In the course of history the realities for which the word "supernatural" stands have interested many kinds of people, and this varying interest has been reflected in the emphasis which they have given to one or other of the possible meanings of the word. These varying emphases, combining and recombining in ever-changing patterns, easily give rise to misunderstanding.

The supernatural has interested the philosopher because it furnishes him with an indispensable concept for his thought. His interest in the supernatural has been an intellectual interest. The philosopher is in search of ultimate truth. He believes in the supernatural, when he does believe in it, because it supplies him with norms which bring order and meaning into a world which, without them, remains opaque to his understanding—such norms as goodness, beauty, truth. To him the supernatural means the perfect.

The saint, too, is interested in the supernatural, but for a different reason. His interest is a practical interest. When a man takes his religion seriously, he wants something that will enable him to realize his ideal of the good life. What he needs he finds in God.

Through faith in God he is lifted above his baser self; he is made conscious of capacities of which he had not dreamed; he discovers his kinship with the eternal. To him, too, the supernatural means the perfect, but it means more than this. It means the creative, the recreative.

Narrower than either of these is the scientific interest.⁷ With ultimate reality or with practical advantage alike, the scientist has no concern. He has but one interest—to bring order out of confusion through the discovery of the laws which make prediction possible. The supernatural, so far as it represents something exceptional or unique, is in the eyes of the man of science not a help but a hindrance. It is either a problem to be solved or an intruder to be banished; for it sets limits to prediction, and it is with the predictable alone that science has to do.

It is a significant fact that while religion has on the whole got on very well with philosophy it has been constantly in difficulty with science. Our libraries are full of books which tell about the conflict of geology with Genesis or recall the dismay that was felt by religious people when Darwin published his *Origin of Species*. In our own day we can still remember how shocking it seemed to be told that Moses did not write the Pentateuch and that Isaiah was not one man, but two, or even half a dozen.

The reason lies in the difference of interest to which we have referred. What to religion seems exceptional

⁷ I use "science" here in the narrower of the two possible meanings of the word to denote the departments of human knowledge which, in contrast to philosophy, confine their interest to those

and unique, science tries to reduce to the level of the commonplace. Where religion finds one cause at work, and that a divine cause, science points to an infinity of different factors which have each their part to play.

Philosophers and theologians, on the other hand, have on the whole got on well together. They have had their conflicts, to be sure, but these have been friendly disputes as between people engaged in the same kind of work. One reason, it may be, why their debates have not caused more trouble to ordinary pious folk has been because of the technical language in which they have been carried on. It has been a habit of philosophers, of long standing, to clothe what they have to say in learned words which convey little or no meaning to the ordinary reader. Sometimes the habit proves practically useful. What saved Scotus Erigena from being burned as a heretic, an old teacher of mine used to tell his class, was the fact that he was not understood.

But the true explanation of the friendship of philosophers and theologians lies deeper. It is that they are dealing with the same realities. Philosophers are not content to study processes. They want to understand meanings, and meanings are meaningless except as the expression of mind. So philosophy cannot stop with the description of activities. It wants to make the acquaintance of the actor. Its subjects of investigation are not light-years or nebulae, ions or

phases or aspects of reality which admit of description and measurement in mathematical terms. In the larger sense of comprehensiveness, accuracy, and impartiality, all philosophy worthy the name aims to be scientific. *Cf.* Chap. X, p. 180.

electrons, X-rays or nerve cells, but nature, man, and God.

This concern with ultimate reality gives philosophy its most direct contact with religion. The religious experience, however startling and novel it may appear, does not come to us out of the void. It meets us in this present world and happens to men still living in the body. So the question how the supernatural, to which religion introduces us, is related to nature in all three of the senses that we have distinguished—as the physical, as the determined, as the actual—becomes one which clamors for an answer. We want this answer for ourselves in order to bring consistency into the different sides of our living. We need it even more for the sake of others with whom we wish to share that which is best in our experience. If we are to win them to faith in the good God who has transformed our lives, we must meet them in the world of thought in which they are living and state our case in terms they will understand.

So the worshipper becomes a theologian, and finds himself plunged into all the speculative matters with which the professional philosopher has to do.

What differentiates religion from philosophy then is not the subject with which each deals, but the method of approach. In the religious attitude there is presupposed a practical relationship which is not present to the same degree in philosophy. Philosophy is an affair of the mind. Religion affects the emotions and the will. In religion we want to know not only what God is like, but also what he does, and even

more what he wants us to do. Indeed, it may be said with truth that in a very literal sense it is only by what he does that we learn what God is like. The great words of religion about God are words of action—creator, revealer, savior, hearer and answerer of prayer. The Psalmist calls God “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”⁸ The Apostle Paul is sure that Christ is what he affirms him to be because he “can do all things through Christ” who strengthens him.⁹

In this willingness to test faith by life religion finds its closest point of contact with science. Science, like religion, lives by faith. It is forward-looking, expectant, unwilling to set bounds to future possibilities. Its method is controlled experiment, and the condition of successful experiment is complete receptivity and open-mindedness.

What differentiates science from religion is the limitation of its field. Science is interested in those aspects of reality, and those alone, which are repeatable; and the supernatural presents such aspects of the highest scientific interest. It includes all that can be known about God through nature, as well as those unique and exceptional activities which it is impossible to bring under law. But while science stops with the first, religion includes the second. Indeed, it is just these unique and exceptional experiences which are the heart of religion. The religious man is not interested in the supernatural in general, at least not at first, but in what God has to say to

⁸ Psalm 46:1.

⁹ Phil. 4:13.

him. His experience of the divine is an individual experience. Moses had this sort of experience with the burning bush, and Saul on the Damascus Road, and Augustine when God spoke to him in the garden, and Bunyan when he heard a voice bidding him flee from the City of Destruction. And when such voices have spoken or such light has shined, the religious man is not interested at all in the mechanism which has brought about the result. It is enough to be sure that the voice he has heard is God's voice and that the message is meant for him.

The mechanism of the experience, on the other hand, and this alone, is of concern to the scientist. If he cannot find out how the light shone, why the voice spoke, neither light nor voice interests him. So through all the ages scientists have been studying religious experiences in a very different mood from that of the men to whom such experiences have happened, and the exceptional happenings which religion calls miracle have been understood by them in a very different way. Religious faith sees in miracle the authentic proof of God. To the scientific reason it presents an unsolved problem, baffling and therefore suspect.

In religion then miracle means revelation; in science unreason. Each definition is legitimate in its place. When they are combined, confusion results.

To sum up, philosophy and religion are concerned with the same aspect of reality, but they approach it by different methods. Science and religion are concerned with different aspects, but their method of

approach is to a considerable extent the same. Religion, like science, wins its certitude by experiment. It is willing to put its faith in a self-revealing God to the test of life. "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."¹⁰ The words are the words of religion, but the spirit is the spirit of science.

To understand the supernatural then in the intimate and personal aspect in which it reveals itself to its worshippers in religion, we must follow the example set by William James and begin by examining the testimony of those who believe themselves to have had first-hand experience of it. And this is made easy for us by the fact that in many different quarters and under many differing names we meet people who tell us, with every appearance of sincerity, that this experience has happened to them. The question of the supernatural is for them no longer an open question. They are sure that they have met the divine face to face and have received convincing evidence of its presence.

¹⁰ Psalm 34:8; John 7:17.

CHAPTER III

THE SUPERNATURAL IN HUMAN LIFE

1. Karl Barth Discovers a Strange New World in the Bible.
2. Anglo-Catholics Find God in the Church.
3. A First Century Christian Fellowship.
4. Other Discoveries Made by Our Contemporaries.
5. What Religious Men Have Found in the Supernatural.

1. KARL BARTH DISCOVERS A STRANGE NEW WORLD IN THE BIBLE

In 1886 there was born at Basle in Switzerland a boy who has powerfully affected the trend of religious thought in Europe. Karl Barth, as became a Swiss, went to the University of Berne. There he was required to make an intensive study of the Bible. The Bible, according to official Protestant creeds, is a supernatural book. It is the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. In the Bible, God has told us what we should believe concerning himself and what duty he requires of us. But Barth found that his professors were treating the Bible like every other book, as a product of human intelligence under particular historic conditions. They spent much of their time discussing questions of authorship and interpretation—who wrote this book and who that; why Paul used this word rather than that and how his usage differed from that of the classical writers.

While Barth remained a student he took this procedure as a matter of course. But when some years later he became a pastor and had to meet the needs of men and women who looked to him for help in daily living, he found that there was little in what he had been taught in the university which helped him to draw from the Bible a life-giving message.

So he began to study the Bible for himself and presently he made a great discovery. To quote his

own words, he found in the Bible "a strange new world."¹ He read of Abraham going out from his father's house to seek a new home, he knew not where; he read of Gideon facing the army of the Midianites; he read of Samuel as a boy bearing strange messages to Eli in the temple—stories like other stories he had known; but as he read them in the Bible he became conscious of something working "behind them," something like "the tremor of an earthquake or like the ceaseless thundering of ocean waves against these dykes." "What is it," he asked himself, "that beats at the barrier and seeks entrance?" He read of Elijah, of Isaiah, of Jeremiah—men seized in spite of themselves by an overwhelming sense of mission that constrained them to speak whether they would or no—and he asked again, "Why do these men speak so? Whence is kindled all the indignation, all the pity, all the joy, all the hope and unbounded confidence which even today we feel flaming up from every page of the prophets and the psalms?"²

He read of Jesus, "no prophet, no poet, no hero, no thinker, and yet all of these, and more"; and as a result of his life and teaching, his tragic death and victorious reappearance, he saw things beginning to happen. Echoes come back to us from the lips of the first missionaries, "weak enough if we compare them

¹ Barth has defined his attitude toward the critical study of the Bible in the opening pages of his *Commentary on Romans*, but a more moving account of his experience is given in an address entitled "The Strange New World Within the Bible," which is included in the collection of his addresses translated by Douglas Horton and published under the title *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (Boston, 1928).

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 29, 30.

with that note of Easter morning, and yet strong, much too strong, for our modern ears"³—Paul's echo, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature";⁴ John's echo, "In him was life and the life was the light of men."⁵

"Who," asked Barth, "spoke such words and lived such a life and set such echoes ringing?"⁶ . . . What is the one truth that all these voices evidently all desire to announce, each in his own way?" And again he answered his own question, "What is there within the Bible?" with the cryptic saying, "Within the Bible there is a strange new world, the world of God."

Starting with this central thought he was led to contrast the Bible, considered as God's revelation of himself to man, with the book as he had had it explained to him in the classrooms of the university.

"What is in the Bible? History?" The answer is true but irrelevant; for we want to know why all the things which it relates have happened, and the Bible considered as history alone cannot tell us this.

"What is in the Bible?" Morality, shall we say? This also is true up to a point, but less so than in the case of history; for in the matter of morality the Bible gives us much which is inadequate and passes over many matters on which we sadly need light. The Bible deals from first to last with one crucial issue, that men should accept the sovereignty of God. "We are offered the magnificent, productive,

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 30, 31.

⁵ John 1:4.

⁴ II Cor. 5:17.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

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⁵ John 1:4.

⁴ II Cor. 5:17.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

hopeful life of a seed of grain, a new beginning out of which all things shall be made new.”⁷

“What do we find in the Bible? Religion subjectively defined; what we are to think concerning God; how we are to find him; how we are to conduct ourselves in his presence; all, in a word, that is included under what we like to call worship and service?” This, too, we find in the Bible; but it is not enough, since it leaves us face to face with our own inadequacies and honest differences. The Bible tells us “not how we should talk to God, but what he says to us; not how we find the way to him, but how he has sought and found the way to us; not the right relation in which we must place ourselves to him, but the covenant which he has made with all who are Abraham’s spiritual children and which he has sealed once and for all in Jesus Christ.”⁸ The Bible, in a word, is revelation, not simply religion. It is the revelation of God, who is not only the Saviour of the individual but the Lord of the mysterious new world that functions in the Bible with an energy beyond all the imaginings of men, summoning us to believe or not to believe.

In these words we catch an authentic echo of the experience of the first Protestants. In the Bible, God spoke to them without the mediation of church or priest and the message set their souls free. But what makes Barth’s experience significant for us is that he is not a sixteenth-century Christian, sharing the intellectual limitations common in that day, but a

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

contemporary of our own, familiar with the latest word of Biblical criticism, committed to its methods, accepting many of its most revolutionary results, yet convinced none the less that the reality it reveals is the same transcendent Creative Spirit who spoke to Luther in his monk's cell, called St. Francis from his father's home, and sent St. Paul on his missionary journeys.

Most interesting of all is the result that has followed from Barth's experience. This Swiss pastor who began his study of the Bible in the hope that he might find something with which to meet the needs of simple folk, has become one of the most influential figures in our religious world. Called from the pastorate to be a teacher of theology, he finds his lecture room crowded. His *Commentary on Romans* has already become a best-seller in Germany and other books have followed in quick succession. Many to whom the inspiration of the Bible had meant simply belief in an inerrant book have been led through his witness to make a thrilling discovery. They, too, have heard God speaking in the Bible; they, too, have entered upon the new life to which Jesus summons; to them too the supernatural has become a present reality.

2. ANGLO-CATHOLICS FIND GOD IN THE CHURCH

Nearly two years ago there died in England a man who had become the recognized leader of the Anglo-Catholic Party in the Anglican Church. A theologian,

as well as a bishop, he was the author of books which have sold by the thousands and tens of thousands. But Bishop Gore was more than a theological teacher. He was a man with broad social vision and searching ethical insight. There was no Christian more trusted by the working men of Great Britain than Charles Gore, none whose voice was more influential when questions of social justice were to the fore. If we had asked him whence he gained the impulse for his life of devotion, he would have answered that it came from God, speaking through his church.

“That in which [the Anglo-Catholic] finds his delight”—he tells us—“is the sense of membership in the great historical church—as supernatural as it is supernatural—which has been sent into the world with the full authority of its Lord to express its devotion to him in its life, in its worship, and in its creeds, and to carry into all departments of human life and all regions of the earth his gospel of human redemption and human fellowship. . . . He sees everywhere in history this Catholic Church with its ringing faith, with its glorious saints, with its rich cycle of sacramental rites—baptism and confirmation, eucharist and penance, matrimony and Holy Orders, and the unction of the sick—encompassing a man’s life from the cradle to the grave and meeting it at every turn with the divine remedy for its varying needs.”⁹

In a word what the Catholic finds in his church is the present God speaking directly to his soul in tones that carry conviction: opening to his perplexed and harassed spirit new sources of strength and of peace.¹⁰

⁹ Gore, Charles, *The Anglo-Catholic Movement To-day* (London and Milwaukee, 1925), pp. 25, 26.

¹⁰ Cf. Kaye-Smith, Sheila, *Anglo-Catholicism* (London, 1925).

Go with a typical Anglo-Catholic to early Mass and you will find that the same thing has happened to him which happened to Barth. He has found a strange new world. Through the sacrament he has become aware of an unseen spiritual presence, as real, yes far more real, than the realities known to us through sense; and through contact with this spiritual presence he has become conscious within himself of undreamed of forces of renewal and uplift. The burden of his guilt has been lifted. The sense of his inadequacy has been removed. He is no longer an individual fighting his solitary battle against pain and sin. He has become one of a company which no man can number. He has been introduced into the communion of saints.

3. A FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Many years ago a young man entered a little village church. There were only seventeen persons present and the speaker was a woman. She spoke of the Cross of Christ and of the satisfaction he had made for the sins of the world. The doctrine was a familiar one to the visitor. His church had taught it and he had known it as a boy, but that day for the first time it became a reality to him. He entered the little church, he tells us,

“with a divided will, nursing pride, selfishness, ill-will, which prevented me from functioning as a Christian minister should. The woman’s simple talk personalized the Cross

for me that day, and suddenly I had a poignant vision of the Crucified.

"There was infinite suffering on the face of the Master, and I realized for the first time the great abyss separating myself from him. That was all. But it produced in me a vibrant feeling, as though a strong current of life had suddenly been poured into me, and afterwards a dazed sense of a great spiritual shaking-up. There was no longer this feeling of a divided will, no sense of calculation and argument, of oppression and helplessness; a wave of strong emotion, following the will to surrender, rose up within me from the depths of an estranged spiritual life, and seemed to lift my soul from its anchorage of selfishness, bearing it across that great sundering abyss to the foot of the Cross."¹¹

That was the beginning of a movement which has spread over more than one continent and touched the lives of many, old and young. It calls itself A First Century Christian Fellowship and it is its aim to recover again the simplicity and assurance which characterized the early Disciples. The methods used by its members are highly unconventional. They invite their friends to a house-party instead of a prayer-meeting, but before they are through the house-party has become a prayer-meeting.

Not long ago a public dinner was held in New York which at that time attracted attention by its novelty. A company of some eight hundred persons assembled at the Plaza Hotel in evening dress to hear testimonies to personal religion. The speakers at the dinner, most of them young people, told the audience in a straightforward and natural way what religion had come to mean to them; how it had

¹¹ Buchman, Frank N., quoted in *For Sinners Only*, by A. J. Russell (London, 1932), p. 58.

changed the direction of their lives; how it had introduced purpose instead of drift, unity in place of division, and joy where all had been dull and drab. Older speakers, who had experienced more of the disappointments and disillusionments of life, told what the visit of a group of these enthusiastic young people had done to bring new courage and hope to communities which had become despondent, even despairing, as a result of financial and moral disaster.

What is novel in this new evangelism is not that it produces sudden conversions. Drunkards and libertines have been transformed by the Christian message since the church began. The novelty consists in the character of those who lead and those who compose the Fellowship and the sort of conversion which they effect. Most of these young people who speak so persuasively of Christ's power to save to the uttermost have never been drunkards or outcasts. The greater part of them have had respectable antecedents. Many among them are members of the Christian church who all their lives, until they touched the Fellowship, have attended Sunday School, listened to sermons, and partaken of sacraments without once dreaming that religion contained anything thrilling and adventurous. But today when they think of religion it means to them the most interesting thing in the world—a source of inner strength and guidance that fills the heart with joy, a joy which is never securely one's own until it has been shared.

4. OTHER DISCOVERIES MADE BY OUR CONTEMPORARIES

The illustrations which I have thus far chosen have been taken from people whose background and environment is that of our Western civilization. But it is not only in Europe or America that our contemporaries are discovering the supernatural or to people whose first contact with religion has been through Christianity that this revolutionary experience has come.

On July 10, 1888, there was born at Kobe, in Japan, a boy who was destined to reveal to many of his fellow-countrymen the power of religion to transform life. The illegitimate son of a politician of considerable influence, Toyohiko Kagawa grew up in an atmosphere the most unfavorable, one would have thought, for the cultivation of religion. An unwanted child, he was left to the care of relatives who had no love to give him. Lonely in his school and lonelier still at home, he found no outlet for the longing which he felt for inward satisfaction until, after a chance meeting with some Christian missionaries, he learned of a God who cares.

Then began one of the most dramatic stories in missionary annals. At seventeen, Kagawa entered the Presbyterian College at Tokyo, where he read Kant's *Pure Reason* and Goethe's *Faust* in English before he graduated from the Middle School. At college, he attracted the attention of his fellow-students because of the great number of serious books which

he read. But, much as he loved books, he loved men and women more. During the Russo-Japanese War he was branded as a traitor because of his public advocacy of non-violence. No one in our time, not even Gandhi, has taken the words of the Gospel more literally. When he was twenty-one he left his comfortable room in the Theological School at Kobe to take up his residence in an adjoining slum district, where ten thousand people lived huddled in a space of only ten blocks. Here he shared his six-by-six room with any chance beggar who might ask admittance, exposing himself without fear to disease, eventually contracting trachoma, which threatens to rob him of his sight.

As the years have gone on his influence has widened. It has extended from individuals to causes: the cause of labor, the cause of the farmer, the cause of world peace. An early volume describing his life in the slums has reached a sale of two hundred and fifty thousand copies and other books have followed in quick succession.

Into all that he has done he has carried a vivid sense of the presence of God. He sees God in nature, but more directly in man. "God," he tells us, "dwells among the lowliest of men. He sits on the dust-heap among the prison convicts. With the juvenile delinquents he stands at the door, begging bread. He throngs with the beggars at the place of alms. He is among the sick. He stands in line with the unemployed in front of the free employment bureaus. Therefore, let him who would meet God visit the

prison cell before going to the temple. Before he goes to church let him visit the hospital. Before he reads his Bible let him help the beggar standing at his door.”¹²

There is no phase of his own experience into which he does not carry this consciousness of the present God. He tells us:

“It is not necessary to go far afield in search for miracles. I am myself a miracle. My physical birth and my soul's existence are miracles. First and foremost the fact that I was ever born is a miracle. The fact that I am still alive despite my shadow-like, weakened body battling a host of devils of disease is a miracle.

“Yet the greatest miracle of all is the reality of my soul. That I should be made victorious in temptations, be the object of God's care in a ruined world, be given assurance to go forward into the world of the devout, this is to me a master miracle. At times the storms of passion shake my soul to its depths, but a purer power, stronger a thousand times, has possession of my being and holds sway over me. When I think of this state of my soul it appears, even to me, a miracle.”¹³

To Kagawa the consciousness of God has come through his contact with Christianity. But in India today there is a man who has come to this consciousness through Hinduism. Like Kagawa, Mahatma Gandhi has a vivid sense of the presence of God which gives to everything that he does a sense of momentous significance. He writes:

“God is the hardest task-master I have known on this

¹² Kagawa, Toyohiko, quoted in *Kagawa*, by William Axling (New York and London, 1932), p. 38.

earth, and he tries you through and through. And when you find that your faith is failing or your body is failing you, and you are sinking, he comes to your assistance somehow or other and proves to you that you must not lose your faith and that he is always at your beck and call, but on his terms, not on your terms. So I have found. I cannot really recall a single instance when, at the eleventh hour, he has forsaken me."¹⁴

This consciousness of divine mission found dramatic expression in the fast which Gandhi undertook, ostensibly as a protest against a provision in the proposed Indian Code granting separate representation to the untouchables. To many in the Western world this procedure on his part seemed the height of folly. In a letter to Ramsay MacDonald announcing his intention the Mahatma recognized that it might lead many to doubt his sanity. Nevertheless he declared that he had no option but to act as he did. We gain a hint of the struggle through which he must have passed before he reached his decision in a private letter written to his friend, C. F. Andrews, some time before and recently published. Responding to a question which Andrews had addressed to him as to his attitude toward the untouchables, he writes:

"I look at the problem as an Indian and a Hindu. You look at it as an Englishman and a Christian. You look at the problem with the eye of an observer. I look at it as an affected and afflicted party. You can be patient. I cannot. Or you, as a disinterested reformer, can afford to be pa-

¹⁴ "Why Voluntary Poverty?" Published in *The World Tomorrow*, December, 1931, p. 399.

tient; whereas I, as a sinner, must be impatient if I would get rid of the sin.

"I may talk glibly of the Englishman's sin in Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar. But, as a Hindu, I may not talk glibly about the sin of Hinduism against the untouchables. I have to deal with the Hindu Dyers. I must act and have ever acted. You act, you do not speak, when you feel most."¹⁵

Here, again, what is significant is not so much what was done as the motive which led to the action and the effect which it produced both upon the actor and upon those who witnessed his action. In Gandhi's case, as in the others we have cited, what he did at the behest of his own conscience and in the sight of God proved a key to open the hearts of multitudes.

5. WHAT RELIGIOUS MEN HAVE FOUND IN THE SUPERNATURAL

The examples which we have taken are all contemporary. There is a reason for this. When we read of the saints and the prophets of the past their story comes to us dressed in a halo of reverence and devotion which often makes it difficult to distinguish fact from fiction. But the witnesses whom we have just cited are with us today. If we do not understand what they say, we can cross-examine them; and they have this advantage over their famous predecessors, that they live in our world and know our difficulties. If, in our sceptical environment, so many voices wit-

¹⁵ Quoted from "Gandhi Offers His Life," by C. F. Andrews, *The Christian Century*, October 26, 1932, p. 1300.

ness to the reality of the supernatural, it is a fair question whether there does not exist under that name something which it is worth our while to find.

But we cannot fully appreciate contemporary witness to the reality of the supernatural unless we place it against the background of that great series of testimony which reaches to the beginning of history and is a part of its earliest record. Wherever we find man, we find a believer in the supernatural. More than this, we find one who has had, as he believes, first-hand experiences of the supernatural. Sometimes these experiences have taken the form of crisis and have resulted in sudden conversion; and again the divine has made its presence known through qualities which, continuously present in some person or institution, have given them a permanent and unique dignity. But whatever the form of the experience may have been, it has had two recurrent characteristics. The men and women to whom it has come have felt themselves in the presence of a Reality at once awe-inspiring, redemptive and adorable, and have recognized, through an inner compulsion, that to this Reality their allegiance was due. When that compulsion has borne its appropriate fruit in act, they have been conscious of a definite accession of vitality. Life has become for them strong, free, joyous. The supernatural without has given birth to the supernatural within.

This surrender of self to the Highest is faith. Faith is an act of the will by which, in response to an inward constraint, a man gives himself to God

only to discover that by that act he has become for the first time truly free. If we wish a single word to describe the supernatural life, we may call it the life of Faith.

PART II
THE LIFE OF FAITH

CHAPTER IV

WHAT THE LIFE OF FAITH IS LIKE

- 1. The Life of Faith as a Life of Contrasts.**
- 2. Marks of the Life of Faith.**

1. THE LIFE OF FAITH AS A LIFE OF CONTRASTS

The first thing that strikes us when we begin to study persons who take their religion seriously is the paradoxical character of the life they live. It seems to consist of a series of inconsistencies, not to say contradictions. They tell us that God, whom they worship, is without them and above; yet at the same time they are conscious of his presence within. They feel themselves to be in constant communion with the unseen; yet this communion is mediated by sense. Their lives are surrendered lives, consecrated to a purpose not their own; yet for the first time they are truly free. Their experience with the divine comes to them in solitude; yet when God is found he must be shared. What they find in him is ageless; yet it is forever new.¹

The poets are our best witness to the paradoxical character of the religious life. They do not feel the philosopher's urge to complete logical consistency. What they feel, they tell us freely. Here is the way a recent Scottish poet describes the religious life:

Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free;

¹ Cf. Whitehead, A. N., *Science and the Modern World* (Cambridge, 1926), p. 275: "Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind and within the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility and yet the greatest of present facts; something which gives meaning to all that passes and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal and the hopeless quest."

Force me to render up my sword,
And I shall conqueror be.
I sink in life's alarms
When by myself I stand;
Imprison me within Thy arms,
And strong shall be my hand.

My heart is weak and poor
Until it master find;
It has no spring of action sure—
It varies with the wind.
It cannot freely move,
Till Thou hast wrought its chain;
Enslave it with Thy matchless love,
And deathless it shall reign.

My power is faint and low
Till I have learned to serve;
It wants the needed fire to glow,
It wants the breeze to nerve;
It cannot drive the world,
Until itself be driven;
Its flag can only be unfurled
When Thou shalt breathe from heaven.

My will is not my own
Till Thou hast made it Thine;
If it would reach a monarch's throne
It must its crown resign;
It only stands unbent,
Amid the clashing strife,
When on Thy bosom it has leant
And found in Thee its life.²

The paradoxical character of the religious life finds expression in the adjective which is often used to describe it. In contrast to the life of duration, in

² Matheson, George, in *The Church Hymnary*, revised edition (Oxford University Press, London, 1927), Hymn 464.

which one event succeeds another in time, it has an ageless quality. Like the life of God from which it comes, it is *eternal* life; or, in other words, a life in which that which is inherently excellent is realized as present. It involves, to quote Baron von Hügel's words, "the consciousness or possession of all of the highest realities and goods sought after or found by man and the sense (more or less) of non-succession; of a complete Present and Presence, and of an utterly abiding here and now." Yet this experience of presence and of possession is possible to men and women living under our human conditions of sense and change and is felt by them when it comes as the final consummation and flowering of capacities which are "latent or patent in every human life."³

None of the witnesses whom we have cited has emphasized the contrast between God and man more strongly than Professor Barth. God, he tells us, is "the Wholly Other" who for the first time reveals to man his helplessness and sinfulness. But this is only one-half of the message of religion. God, who is the Judge, is the Redeemer also. "Who is God?" Barth asks. And he answers: "The heavenly Father! but the heavenly Father even upon earth, really the heavenly Father. He will not allow life to be split into a here and a beyond. He will not leave to death the task of freeing us from sin and sorrow. He will bless us . . . with the power of life and resurrection. . . . He purposes nought but the establishment of a new world."

³ *Eternal Life*, pp. 1, 2.

"Who is God?" God is "the Son, who has become the mediator of my soul;" but more than that, who has become "the mediator for the whole world, . . . the redeemer of my brothers and sisters, of a humanity gone astray, . . . of the groaning creation about us."

— "Who is God?"—the spirit of love and goodwill within us? Yes. But God is also that spirit which will and must break forth from quiet hearts into the world outside that it may be manifest, visible, comprehensible. "For behold, God is with us, through his Holy Spirit," making "a new heaven and a new earth, and therefore new men, new families, new relations, new politics."⁴

This is what our contemporaries tell us has been happening to them. Not only has their vision been widened; their life has been changed. They have not simply discovered the supernatural world; they have made it their home.

It may seem hopeless to attempt any detailed description of this baffling and elusive phenomenon. The outstanding impression that has been left by our first contact with the religious life is of radical contrast to life on the level at which it is ordinarily lived. The words used by Barth to tell of his discovery of the world to which the Bible introduced him most fitly describe the supernatural life in every form. It is strange and it is new. Whether we meet it in church or in Bible, or in private and personal experiences, it is a life so different as to be arresting and so novel as to be startling.

⁴ *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, pp. 48-50.

Yet when we study this new life more carefully and observe the conduct of those who are living it, we find that it differs from the life the rest of us are living not so much by the possession of qualities which are wholly absent from our life as by the extent to which it develops certain graces which in us are imperfect.⁵

2. MARKS OF THE LIFE OF FAITH

Worship marks the life of faith wherever it is found. Faith is God-centred. It is upward-looking, outgoing, self-forgetting. In contrast to God, who alone is perfect, the worshipper knows that he is

⁵ Among recent Catholic writers, Baron von Hügel has insisted most strongly upon the naturalness of the religious life. The supernatural, he reminds us, is never the abnormal, rather the natural raised to the highest degree of perfection of which it is capable. Since he is a good Catholic he does not deny the possibility of miracle in the metaphysical sense in which it is affirmed in the official teaching of his church, but it is not miracle of this kind in which he is most interested. He would have us think of the supernatural life as accessible to any one who will use the opportunities which are open to all for its cultivation and appropriation. He does not take his examples—though as a good Catholic he might have taken them—from the dramatic healings which faith attributes to our Lady of Lourdes and others of the saints, but from more homely instances which have come under his own observation of the victory of spirit over self-indulgence and fear. He tells us of a priest who is untroubled as he ministers to the dying on the battlefield; of a boy who dares social ostracism rather than be false to the truth; of a man, with all a man's natural instincts, who conquers physical passion at the behest of sacrificial love. In experiences like these, where familiar virtue is carried to heroic heights, the Baron finds his characteristic examples of the supernatural; for they show, as he believes, a richness, a romance, an emancipation from all that is commonplace and monotonous which irresistibly suggests God. It is, to use his own phrase, "as if God had put salt in our mouths, so that we now thirst for what we have experienced." Cf. "Christianity and the Supernatural," in *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, first series, pp. 271-298.

unworthy, sinful, helpless; yet at the same time he feels within himself something which is akin to God. The impulse which leads him to look up and out is an answer to a voice which speaks to him within. In finding God he has found his own true self.

The hymn writers of the church have for their central theme this discovery of self in God. They sing of a faith that looks up, of a love that will not let us go. The metaphors used vary with the experience and background of the worshippers, but the thing they say is always the same. They tell us that they have but one desire—to possess God, or rather to be possessed by him.

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art,—
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee, Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle-shield, sword for the fight;
Be Thou my dignity, Thou my delight,
Thou my soul's shelter, Thou my high tower:
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my Power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thine mine inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art.⁶

⁶ Ancient Irish translation by Mary Byrne; versified by Eleanor Hull, *The Church Hymnary*, revised edition (Oxford University Press, London, 1927), Hymn 477.

This God-consciousness may show itself as a mystic absorption in the divine which makes all human contacts unnecessary, even disturbing; or, as in the case of Gandhi and of Kagawa, in an extraordinary devotion to men. Jesus teaches that the two aspects of the outgoing life—love to God and love to man—are indissolubly united. "Come ye after me" was his first word to his disciples. But his message did not stop there. "Come ye after me and I will make you to become fishers of men."⁷ The new life to which Jesus summons is both a life of worship and a life of service and it is the second because it is the first.

Yet whether the life of faith take the form of mystic absorption or of ethical loyalty, it is a life in which contact with God the Spirit is mediated by sense. God's word comes to us through eye and ear, his sacrament through taste and touch, and even the most extreme ascetic returns from his highest flight of detachment to find that he is still living in the body.

Spontaneity is another characteristic of the life of faith. It brings release from the inhibitions which have hitherto limited action; it makes men adequate to the tasks still to be done. "I can do all things," says Paul, "through Christ which strengtheneth me." "With men it is impossible," says Jesus, "but not with God, for with God all things are possible."⁸

But this new freedom is the result of a previous surrender. The will has been relieved from the strain of conflicting loyalties because it has found rest in a

⁷ Mark 1:17.

⁸ Phil. 4:13; Mark 10:27.

single compelling loyalty. In his famous tract on Christian freedom Luther explains how the Christian, just because he is the freest of men, has become the servant of all. He is only expressing in other words what Paul said centuries ago: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."⁹

Many consequences follow from this unification of the life. It enhances vitality. It supplies the increment of power of which William James wrote in his essay on "The Energies of Men."¹⁰ It removes obstacles which have prevented us from making use of the powers we already possess. Above all, through its assurance of divine forgiveness, it brings release from the greatest of all obstacles to effective living, the loss of personal self-respect which follows a surrender to the baser self. The shame that often masquerades as recklessness, the guilt that one cannot forgive in oneself, even if others are willing to overlook it: these have been dealt with once and for all by the discovery that God can understand and, understanding, will pardon.

This consciousness of forgiveness, bringing relief from what sensitive spirits have always felt to be the one insuperable obstacle to happiness, makes religion good news. No religion has carried this revolutionary Gospel so far as Christianity, which reveals God as taking upon himself the burden of man's sin, that through the spectacle of his sacrificial love he

⁹ II Cor. 4:3.

¹⁰ Cf. *Memories and Studies* (New York, 1912), Chapter X.

may deliver man from his worst fear, the fear of himself, and introduce him to a new life of freedom and peace.

This experience of release, whether it expresses itself in gratitude for pardoned sin or in consecration to some unifying aim, comes to men one by one and to each in a different way. The religious life must have its moments of solitude, since it belongs to the soul's relation to God that God should have something for each individual which is meant for him alone. But religion does not leave men in their isolation, for the life of faith is also a life of fellowship, and a fellowship of an unusual kind. It is the companionship of those who have learned what it means to be alone with God.

In his interesting book, *What I Owe to Christ*, C. F. Andrews gives an illustration of the way in which the fellowship which faith makes possible grows out of a previous experience of solitude. After his conversion, he tells us, he

"spoke very little to any one concerning what had happened, and for a long while could not bring myself to do so. It seemed to be too sacred to relate even to those who were closest to me and to belong rather to those inward things that cannot be told. We read in the Gospel how Mary 'kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.' That was the feeling uppermost in my own mind in those days."¹¹

But while he found it hard to speak directly of his experience, he was equally conscious of a desire

"to put this new-found joy into practice. Near the church

¹¹ (London, 1932), p. 194.

wherein I had worshipped Sunday by Sunday was a slum quarter where drunkenness and vice were forced upon the poor by their poverty itself, creating a vicious circle. Never before had I even dreamed of visiting these homes or seeing these poor people. But now they became very dear to me for Christ's sake. I could not speak much about my own deep inner experience, and an instinct forbade me to do so. But it was not difficult for me to make friends; and I would go from house to house getting to know different people, seeking to help them wherever occasions arose. In this way the weeks and months went by, and the vision of Christ remained with me all the while."¹²

This combination of privacy with fellowship is not confined to ethical religions like Christianity. It is found in mystical religions like Buddhism and Hinduism as well. When the Buddha, who carried detachment to its extremest limits, had discovered the way to Nirvana he could not forget the unfortunates who did not yet know of the noble eight-fold path and he remained on earth to minister to them. In one of the later Buddhist sects his devotion is represented as extending still further. Even after he had attained Nirvana he was not content to stay there, but in successive incarnations returned to earth on a ministry of love.

Love, then, is an essential characteristic of the supernatural life. But it is love of a distinctive kind. It is not based upon personal liking. It does not depend for its existence upon congeniality of interest or of taste. It has its roots in a sense of the inherent worth of the human spirit, which in turn has its explanation in the relation of the one who loves to God. "We love," says the Apostle, "because he first loved

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

us."¹³ It is the fact that through God we acquire new standards for our own lives which makes it possible for us to discover new elements of worth in our neighbors' lives.

This sense of undiscovered capacities in the human spirit explains Gandhi's attraction to the untouchables and Kagawa's taking up his residence in the Kobe slums. In making their friends among the poor and the despised they are following a high example. It was said of Jesus, and the phrase was meant as a reproach, that he found his friends among the publicans and sinners.

One more note of the life of faith must be mentioned—a joy that has no bounds. This joy is not simply the happiness that comes with health, whether of body or of spirit, when every muscle makes its appropriate contribution to the work to be done and every nerve carries its message true, nor is it the happiness which comes with mental tranquillity and the setting aside of selfish aims. Such happiness does go with the new life, but in addition there is a special joy of comradeship, a love between spirits mutually devoted to the highest ends, and this unique joy transfigures and glorifies life.

Here is what Temple Gairdner¹⁴ has to say as, lifting for a moment the curtain of reticence by which he was wont to veil the story of his conversion, he tells of the effect which contact with Christ produced in his life:

"When I got to Trinity I seemed unrecognizable to my-

¹³ I John 4:19.

¹⁴ A missionary of the Church of England in Cairo.

self and it was as though I was walking on air. I went straight to the room below mine, where my chief pal lived, to tell him about this incredible experience. There were men with him and I merely gaped at him and them—they appeared to me as if one had looked at them from the wrong end of a telescope, phantasms, inhabiting a totally different world from the incredible world I suddenly found myself inhabiting: a new world, breathing new air; all things new. And when I got up the next morning I went straight to Hills and Saunders and put in hand that text which I always had in my rooms and which you may remember in the drawing-room, 'Behold, I make all things new.'

"It seemed the one text in the Bible for me that day; for I was walking in a world indescribably beautified, indescribably lovely: with my heart exactly as the heart of a bride with her lover, so overmastering was the realization of the Presence—I had almost said the embrace of Christ. Yes, I knew it then: and the embrace was returned! It was wonderful. I avoided all company; I could not bear any. I stayed up a day or two just to enjoy solitude with the unseen Lover. And when I went down to Glasgow, I did not go alone."¹⁵

This note of joy is equally present in Andrews' account of his own conversion:

"The supreme blessing from on high seemed to be given to me personally—to me, even me—at that divine hour, as a gift of love from God himself. All the peace and joy of forgiveness, which I had known on the previous night came back intensified a thousandfold, until the flood of God's abounding love was poured around me like the great ocean, wave upon wave, while I knelt with bowed head to receive it. I waited on in the church, a long while, quite oblivious of everything else, kneeling in thankful adoration. So unconscious was I of anything outside me that in the end the doorkeeper came and tapped me abruptly on the shoulder,

¹⁵ Padwick, C. E., *Temple Gairdner of Cairo* (London, 1929), pp. 25, 26.

thinking I had fallen asleep. He wished to close the church doors and go home. So vivid is the memory still that I can picture the start I gave when he brought me back into the outer world."¹⁶

Sometimes the language used of this new-found bliss seems so extravagant that it is hard to believe that mortals can have had the ecstatic experiences which they report. In mystical literature one of the favorite analogies is that of the love of husband for wife or of lover for his beloved.¹⁷

Yet the joy that religion brings is not won without cost. More often the path to it leads through

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 94.

¹⁷ In a canticle which he prefaces to his book *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* (London, 1922, p. 2), St. John of the Cross, one of the greatest of the Spanish mystics, thus describes the experience of the soul in its fellowship with the living Christ:

O, guiding night;
O, night more lovely than the dawn;
O, night that has united
The lover with His beloved
And changed her into her love.

On my flowery bosom,
Kept whole for Him alone,
There He reposed and slept;
And I caressed Him, and the waving
Of the cedars fanned Him.

As His hair floated in the breeze
That blew from the turret,
He struck me on the neck
With His gentle hand,
And all sensation left me.

I continued in oblivion lost,
My head was resting on my love;
Lost to all things and myself,
And, amid the lilies forgotten,
Threw all my cares away.

Of the experience of St. Francis described by Jørgensen (Life, p. 34).

sorrow. Always it involves sacrifice and renunciation. Sometimes it ends, or seems to end, at the Cross. But the wonder is that the defeat is not final. In the end, love masters grief and wins from and through suffering a diviner bliss.

Among the letters of Baron von Hügel there is one which he wrote to Mr. Gladstone's daughter on the death of her father after an illness which had brought the great leader much suffering. After paying a tribute to all that Mr. Gladstone had done through his life of unusual activity, Baron von Hügel concludes with these remarkable words:

"I have always loved to think of devoted suffering as the highest, purest, perhaps the only quite pure form of action: and so it was a special grace and specially appropriate, that one as devoted and as active as your Father, should have been allowed and strengthened to practise the most devoted action possible for a sentient and rational creature of God."¹⁸

These words, spoken by one who through the discipline of a long life had learned to weigh the words he spoke, remind us of an aspect of the life of faith which, of all its paradoxes, seems strangest to our pleasure-loving age—its power to transform suffering into joy. Paul had this power. "I rejoice in my sufferings for you," we hear him say, "for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolations abound."¹⁹ Jesus had it. "Blessed are ye," he said to his disciples, "when men shall revile you and perse-

¹⁸ von Hügel, F., *Selected Letters* (1896-1924), ed. by B. Holland (London, 1927), p. 70.

¹⁹ Col. 1:24; II Cor. 1:5.

cute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.”²⁰

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James cites the experience of Blanche Gramont, a Huguenot woman who, during the persecution under Louis XIV, was tied to a post and beaten with rods. Yet it was at this moment, she tells us, that she “received the greatest consolations, since I had the honor of being whipped in the name of Christ. . . . In vain the women [who beat me] cried, ‘We must redouble our blows. She does not feel them, for she neither speaks nor cries.’ How should I have cried when I was swooning with happiness within?”²¹

Not the martyrs only but multitudes of plain everyday men and women have experienced the power of religion to bring joy out of sorrow. Their faith in God has been a source of inner fortitude which has helped them to pass with equanimity through the severest trials life can send. When the storm has raged most fiercely without they have had peace within.²²

Speaking of this phase of the religious experience, Professor James tells us that of “all those shiftings of inner equilibrium” which as a psychologist it had

²⁰ Matt. 5:11, 12.

²¹ (New York, 1902), pp. 288, 289.

²² Those who must suffer physical pain in the present day, both Protestants and Catholics, may find comfort and strength in the “Journal” of a modern saintly soul, Elizabeth Leseur, published after her death by her husband. She was a woman of the world, gay and attractive, happily married to a journalist of reputation. Her home was a centre of hospitality for the intellectuals of Paris, but though deeply and sincerely religious she never obtruded her religion upon others. Only after her death, which followed a long

been his principal duty to analyze, "the transition from tension, self-responsibility, worry, to equanimity, receptivity, and peace" has been the most wonderful. "And the chief wonder of it is that it so often comes about not by doing, but simply by relaxing and throwing the burden down. This abandonment of self-responsibility seems to be the fundamental act in specifically religious, as distinct from moral, practice."²³

In an autobiographical fragment, Mahatma Gandhi tells us how in his pursuit of the ideal to which he had consecrated himself he had to throw overboard many things which he counted as his. At first the process was painful, but "a time came when it became a matter of positive joy to give up the things. . . . A great burden fell off his shoulders and he felt that he could walk with ease and do his work in the service of his fellows with great comfort, and still greater joy."²⁴ Analyzing the source of this joy, he finds it not simply in the relief that comes from the absence of many possessions, though that is

period of physical suffering, was the faith revealed which during months and years of torture kept her cheerful and normal, and made for her multitudes of friends both young and old. Her "Journal," found by her husband after her death, reveals the thoughts which supported her in her long trial.

"Our suffering," she writes, "works mysteriously, first in ourselves by a kind of renewal, and also in others, perhaps far away, without our ever knowing what we are accomplishing. Suffering is an action. Christ on the Cross has perhaps done more for humanity than Christ speaking and acting in Galilee or Jerusalem. Suffering creates life; it transforms all that it touches."—Leseur, Elizabeth, *A Wife's Story: The Journal of Elizabeth Leseur*; trans. from the French by V. M.; 2d ed. (London, 1921), pp. 201-202.

²³ *Op. cit.*, p. 289.

²⁴ *The World Tomorrow*, December 1931, p. 398.

a factor, but in the absolute conviction that all that man has—not outward things only, but the very body itself—is given him by God to be used in trust for service during all man's working hours.²⁵

Brother Lawrance, in many respects a kindred spirit, carried renunciation even further, for he was willing to surrender soul as well as body. But the result was the same. He tells us "that he had long been, troubled in mind with a sure belief that he was lost, but that he had thus reasoned with himself about it. 'I engaged in a religious life only for the love of God, and I have endeavored to act only for him. Whatever becomes of me, whether I be lost or saved, I will always continue to act purely for the love of God.' . . . Since then he had passed his life in perfect liberty and continual joy."²⁶

This, then, is what the life of faith is like. It is a life which is satisfying because it is consistent; a life lived from a single centre, complete, not partial; unified, not divided. It is a life wholly surrendered to God and so at once glad and free. All this and more we mean when, borrowing the words from Jesus, we say of the life to which he invites us: It is the perfect life and therefore it is a blessed life.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

²⁶ Quoted in Oldham, J. H., *A Devotional Diary* (New York, 1926), 3rd month, day 14.

CHAPTER V

THE BASIS FOR FAITH IN THE NATURE OF MAN

1. The Problem Presented by the Inequalities of the Religious Experience.
2. How Psychology Helps Us to Understand Man's Capacity for Religion.
3. How the Miracles of Religion Differ from the Miracles of Science.
4. The Fourfold Root of the Miracle Faith.

1. THE PROBLEM PRESENTED BY THE INEQUALITIES OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Though the description which has thus far been given of the life of faith is accurate in all its details, every one of the characteristics which we have described having been verified again and again in controllable examples, yet it must be admitted that the total effect of such a description gives a very imperfect impression of the religious life as it is actually lived by the persons with whom we are most familiar. All the things of which we have spoken happen in their experience, but they happen sporadically, infrequently, in varying degree. What we have portrayed is the highwater mark of the religious life. We have pictured an ideal partially approximated rather than a reality everywhere realized.

How does it happen then that if such a satisfying life is possible, so few attain it, and that even those who do attain it, do not possess it always perfectly?

One answer often given is that religion in the grand style is not open to all men. It means the intrusion of a transcendent factor into human life.¹ Since God is the wholly other, standing over against man in absolute contrast, the first step in vital religion is to recognize the contrast as absolute and to confess one's helplessness to do anything of oneself

¹ This is, in substance, Calvin's answer, as reasserted by his latest disciple, Karl Barth.

to win knowledge or experience of God.² Religion of this type is supernatural, in the negative sense in which, as we have seen, supernatural religion presents an insoluble problem to science.

Another explanation is that the inequalities of the religious experience, like the inequalities of other phases of our experience, are to be explained by the unequal use of a capacity which is common to all. Although religion is natural to man, in the sense that all men are capable of becoming religious, men use this capacity in varying degrees, and the result of this unequal development appears in the variations of the religious experience.³

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that while religion is natural to men, and man in the use of his normal powers may attain to a trustworthy though limited knowledge of God, the religious life in its higher stages depends upon the presence in chosen individuals of supernatural gifts and graces which it is not God's will that all should possess to the same degree. God has chosen certain persons to be the recipients of these special gifts and graces, and it is to these, and to these alone, that we must look for our models in the religious life.

2. HOW PSYCHOLOGY HELPS US TO UNDERSTAND MAN'S CAPACITY FOR RELIGION

In the face of these varying explanations, it is natural for the modern man to turn to psychology

² Though Barthians, like the older Calvinists, admit that reason may perform a negative function in preparing the way for faith.

³ This is the Arminian view.

for help. The psychologist, so far as he is a scientist and not a philosopher, can take no account of realities which go beyond the limits of empirical observation. But with religion as a personal experience of man, he has a direct concern. If we want to learn how far religion is native to man, he should be our best witness.

For more than a generation the psychologists have been analyzing the factors which enter into the religious life, considered as an observable phenomenon, and they have classified its most important types. They have shown us that, however much *more* there may be in religion than appears on the surface, it makes appeal to needs and capacities that are native to man. Whether these needs and capacities are in all respects the same as give rise to man's other interests and activities, or whether there is in the religious experience a distinctive quality, not further analyzable, is still in dispute. But even those who take the most extreme view of man's helplessness face, to face with God, must still admit that there is something in man that makes contact with God possible.⁴

It is this something in man which makes the religious experience natural, from which the psychologists take their point of departure. In their cool objective way, they have been studying the religious

⁴ Even Karl Barth, who, of all contemporary theologians, has expressed the contrast between God and man in its most extreme form, admits that in his approach to man God uses all the avenues through which, in other phases of man's experience, knowledge becomes possible. Among these avenues the intellect, the will, and the emotional nature all have their place. Cf. *Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes* (Munich, 1932), pp. 210-212.

life, and they have discovered that the experiences which seem to religious people so extraordinary, have psychological antecedents which go far to explain them. Properly analyzed and ticketed they are found to be only illustrations in the field of religion of something which is happening to men in other ways all the time. Conversion, the psychologists tell us, is nothing out of the ordinary. It is a normal experience for young people and usually takes place at adolescence; but it may happen to any of us at any time. As a matter of fact all kinds of people are converted to all kinds of things, often under circumstances which have nothing to do with religion.⁵ Saint-hood, in like manner, is a religious name for a psychological type which has been known to the dramatist for centuries—the man who sticks at nothing to

⁵ In his fascinating book *Liaison 1914* (London, 1930), Brigadier-General E. L. Spears, the British officer who represented General French's staff at the headquarters of General Lanrezac of the Fifth French Army during the fateful days that preceded the battle of the Marne, gives this reminiscence of one of the most original characters in the French Army, General de Maud'huy:

It was on the Aisne, he tells us, that he witnessed the following incident:

"General de Maud'huy had just been roused from sleep on the straw of a shed and was standing in the street when a little group of unmistakable purport came round the corner. Twelve soldiers and an N. C. O.—a firing party—a couple of gendarmes and between them an unarmed soldier. My heart sank and a feeling of horror overcame me. General de Maud'huy gave a look: then held up his hand so that the party halted. And, with his characteristic quick step, went up to the doomed man. He asked what he had been condemned for. It was for abandoning his post. The General then began to talk with the man. Quite simply he explained discipline to him. 'Abandoning your post was letting down your pals. It was letting down your country that looked to you to defend her.' He spoke of the necessity of example—how some could do their duty without prompting, and others, less strong, had to know and understand the

gain his end. Let a man make money his God, and instead of a saint you have a miser. If ambition be his controlling passion, he becomes a Cæsar or a Napoleon. As for mysticism, we are all mystics at certain moments and see visions which carry instant conviction until time brings its disillusionment and hard facts force us to distrust our dreams.

And if this were the whole story we should have to admit that the psychologists are the true theologians. As truly as there are laws which determine bodily action, there are laws which regulate the inner life, and religion is no exception to these laws. The psychologists were not the first to tell us this. They are only saying over again what our religious teachers have long been saying, that the supernatural life is

supreme cost of failure. He told the condemned man that his crime was not venial, not low, and that he must die as an example so that others should not fail. Surprisingly the wretch agreed, nodded his head. The burden of infamy was lifted from his shoulders. He saw a glimmer of something, redemption in his own eyes, a real hope though he knew he was to die.

"Maud'huy went on, carrying the man with him to comprehension that any sacrifice was worth while if it helped France ever so little. What did anything matter if he knew that?

"Finally de Maud'huy held out his hand. 'Yours also is a way of dying for France,' he said. The procession started again, but now the victim was a willing one." (Pp. 458, 459.)

Here we have a case of the complete transformation of a mental state for which we should have to seek a parallel in some of the reports of death-bed conversions. A disgraced soldier, sullen and despairing, contemplating a humiliating death, is changed by a few moments of conversation into a man who willingly gives his life for a cause. His dignity as a human being has been restored. He feels the calm of the converted sinner, and yet no religious motive has been appealed to, and the cause for which he is ready to die is not that of God but of country.

There are many such cases of what we might call secular conversion. "Why then," the psychologists ask us, "should we wonder at religious conversion?"

the life for which man was meant and therefore in the highest degree normal.

But the question still remains how the religious life differs from other kinds of life, and why it is important for us to possess it. We may explain to our heart's content the psychological ingredients that go into the making of love, but we shall never persuade the normal man that the thrill he feels when the one woman in the world comes in his way is not the revelation of a reality which deserves the best response that he can give. So conversion may have its psychological antecedents and follow its unchanging laws. But it makes all the difference in the world to what a man is converted, whether his loyalty is to his family, his class, his country, or to the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. As for visions, they differ as widely as the things which we see with our physical eyes. The psychological process is the same, but the objects contemplated may be as different as heaven and hell.

We may illustrate the contribution that psychology is fitted to make to our understanding of religion as well as its limitations, by the way in which it accounts for the religious man's belief in miracle. Miracle, to be sure, is not the whole of religion or even its most important part; but it is that aspect of the religious man's experience through which his faith in the immediate intervention of God in human life comes to most direct and dramatic expression. If we can find out what there is in man that makes him a believer in miracle, we shall have taken the first step

in answer to our question, what there is in man which makes religion natural to him.

3. HOW THE MIRACLES OF RELIGION DIFFER FROM THE MIRACLES OF SCIENCE⁶

We may define miracle—in the sense in which alone religion is interested in it—as an exceptional event, or quality in an event, in nature or in human life, the significance of which consists in the fact that religious faith sees in it the self-revealing activity of God.

This reference to revelation reminds us of the point at which the religious man's interest in miracle differs from that of the scientist. In science emphasis falls upon the exceptional character of the event deemed miraculous; in religion, upon its enlightening quality. A miracle, as faith conceives it, is not simply a wonder, but a sign. It is a strange fact with a divine meaning, a luminous surprise.

Miracle in this sense is as old as religion and as universal. As far back as we can go we find men confronted with strange phenomena and interpreting them as messages of the gods. Whatever impressed the imagination as extraordinary or unusual, whether in the larger arena of nature or in the narrower sphere of the individual life—the lightning, an earthquake, a pestilence, a meteor, a dream, a sickness, an accident, a recovery—was at least raw material

⁶ In the part of the text which follows I have drawn upon my Dudleian Lecture for 1915, "The Permanent Significance of Miracle for Religion." *Op. cit.*, pp. 298-322.

for the miracle faith. Every religion ancient enough to have a history has its wonder stories, its divine healings, its heavenly visitants. Christianity, bringing its own marvels, enters a field already tenanted. The chief difficulty of the missionary when he tells his converts of God's wonderful dealings with his people in the past is not the scepticism which questions the miraculous, but the credulity which takes it as a matter of course.

Scarcely less striking than the antiquity of the belief is its persistence. It has outlived the passing of many philosophies; it has been killed many times, only to come to life again. Like every practical conviction which has lasted long enough to make itself a place in history, its expression has been affected by its changing intellectual background.⁷ But outlasting all changes of philosophical theory, we find a recurring experience which is characterized by the union of qualities already described—the sense of wonder, and the sense of meaning. This recurring experience brings to the man who has it a conviction that God is dealing with him in an immediate and significant way.

If then, I repeat, we can find why, in spite of all the changes in the intellectual environment, man has

⁷ In his book, *Esquisse d'une Philosophie de la Religion* (Paris, 1897, pp. 64–102), Auguste Sabatier has given us a useful account of the nature and range of this variation. He reminds us that the view of the world held by the dogmatic theologians who formulated the traditional apologetic was not the same as that of the unreflective thinkers whose world was still inhabited by the spirits of brook and cloud and tree. This in turn differs from that of modern pluralists like James, or pragmatists like Ritschl. Cf. also Ménégoz, *La Notion Biblique du Miracle* (Paris, 1894).

gone on believing in miracle, we shall have discovered what there is in man which makes him capable of religion. Here psychology has help to give, for it brings to our attention certain characteristics of human nature which, when the proper stimulus is present, make it natural for man to believe in miracle; more than this, which make such belief inevitable.

4. THE FOURFOLD ROOT OF THE MIRACLE FAITH

I have spoken of characteristics rather than of a single characteristic, for it will appear upon examination, that the roots of the belief we are studying are not simple but complex. Miracle in the religious sense has meant different things at different times, and answered different needs for different people. In order to understand the genesis of the belief we have to analyze it into its elements and find the point of contact for each in the nature of man. Among these elements, recurring from age to age and manifesting themselves with varying intensity, are the capacity for wonder, the consciousness of enlightenment, the experience of reinforcement, and the longing for certainty.

The first thing that makes a man a believer in miracle is the fact that he is a being who does not take things for granted. We defined miracle as a strange fact with a divine meaning, a luminous surprise. Surprise is indeed the most obvious and the most persistent characteristic of man's experience of the miraculous. He sees something startling, arrest-

ing, attention-compelling; something that transcends his previous experience. Think as he will, he cannot reduce it to the level of the commonplace. It is something which he must either dismiss altogether, as wholly unrelated to his present interests and activities, or else approach from some different angle and assign some new and hitherto undreamed of meaning. Take away the sense of surprise, relate the new experience to what has gone before, as one more example of a well-tried category; bring it as we say under law, and the quality which constitutes it miracle would disappear, as the morning star fades and at last is extinguished altogether before the oncoming dawn.

Clearly, then, a primary explanation of man's belief in miracle is to be found in the fact that he is a being capable of surprise, and that the world is full of things that surprise him. Could we exhaust our resources either of new things to be experienced, or of new interest to bring to the experience of them, we should outgrow miracle. But so long as these last, its possibility, at least, is always present.

This explains the persistence of belief in miracle, in spite of the growth of science. However fast knowledge grows, curiosity grows faster. It finds new material to feed on. Its centre of interest shifts. The things that surprised our ancestors no longer surprise us, or at least not for the same reason, and in the same way; but that is because we have found new things that seem to us still more wonderful. They lived in the immediate present, and each strange ex-

perience that came to them was something isolated and independent. When it thundered, a spirit was angry; when it lightened, he was throwing his spear. When they dreamed, they saw the vanished dead face to face and received first-hand messages from realms otherwise inaccessible. But to us contacts appear of which they little dreamed. These isolated occurrences have been shown by science to be parts of a system of occurrences that succeed one another in orderly and predictable fashion. Nature is to us no longer the home of independent and contending spirits. It is a system of forces and relations acting according to principles which we are able in part to catalogue, and believe we shall be able in the future to catalogue more exhaustively still. But for all that, the world is none the less wonderful to us, and surprise has not been banished. It has only shifted its hiding place. The strange thing to us is not so much the event itself as the setting in which it occurs, the consequences which follow from it, and above all the reaction which it calls forth in the experience of the beholder.

This is what we meant by including in our definition of miracle not merely events but qualities of events. This points to the element of value which is always present in the miracle belief. It is not simply the fact that something has happened which constitutes a miracle, but something that makes a particular kind of impression, namely, the impression of novelty and uniqueness. And this impression may be present quite as strongly in the case of events which

belong to the natural series as of those which we have not yet been able to bring under law—a sunrise, for example, or a birth, or the look in a woman's eyes.

Take, for example, that old puzzle that has baffled scientists so long—the origin of life. Suppose we were able to solve it in the sense in which science understands solution. Suppose we should hit upon the combination of elements, for which hitherto we have been searching in vain, whose union would enable us to make the transition from the inorganic to the organic. What would we have accomplished? From the point of view of our practical powers much, but from the point of view of our ultimate understanding nothing at all. How comes it that elements which in isolation remain helpless and inert, receive through contact the mysterious property we call life? What is the origin of the new thing that we experience, of which the scientist's formula is only the shorthand record? Suppose we could be there and see what happened with our own eyes when the contact was made, would it seem any less marvellous, any less inexplicable, any less fitted, in short, to call forth the emotion of wonder and awe which have been the parent of the miracle faith in every age?

The illustration chosen is of the simplest. It is enough to suggest the possibilities it opens without attempting to follow them into all their ramifications. When we have explained protoplasm we are only at the beginning of our task. There remain consciousness, species, personality, character, individuality in all its variations, and the endless combinations in

which their contact one with another and with physical nature results. There is history with its drama of races and of nations; there is art; there is science; there is literature; there is religion: all challenging our interest and awaiting an explanation. Carry our science as far as we please, test and re-test our generalization in the light of advancing knowledge and enlarging experience, and we need have no fear that we shall exhaust our capital of novelties or render surprise an obsolete attitude. So far as it grows out of our sense of wonder the roots of the miracle faith are with us still.

It is evident then that one root of the miracle belief is the limitation of our knowledge. It is the fact that the things to be experienced so far exceed in number and in range the things that we have experienced in the past; that however much we may have discovered, and however much we may have learned, there remains always the boundless sea of the undiscovered and the unexplored, from which new messengers are continually coming to rouse our curiosity and remind us of our ignorance.

But true as this is as far as it goes, it is not a complete statement. If the experience of the miraculous were no more than a reminder of human limitation it would be the most depressing of experiences; whereas on the contrary it exalts and inspires. I have spoken of wonder as if it were a confession of weakness. It would be quite as true to call it a prophecy of greatness. Wonder is a window opening upward. It is man's consciousness of kinship to a greater. You

cannot surprise a stone. But a man is always asking why. He is conscious of capacity for appreciating the greatest, and he is never satisfied in the presence of an unexplained mystery. The unexpected is more than a disturbance. It is a challenge. In miracle, man finds a meaning in what would otherwise be inexplicable.

It is only when we fix our attention upon this enlightening quality in miracle that we appreciate its true significance. We have called it a strange fact with a meaning, a *luminous* surprise.

This distinction is of fundamental importance for the whole question of miracle. It marks the dividing line between the scientific and the religious interest. The scientific man is interested in the cause of the event, the religious man in its meaning. When the scientist has shown that you cannot account for what has happened by natural law (or that you can, as the case may be) his interest is at an end. But the interest of the religious man is only beginning. What has this strange event to tell man which is significant for his life? What message does it bring from the gods?

This illustrates a point about the miracle belief to which we have already had occasion to refer, namely, the shifting character of the object with which it is associated. For primitive man the significant things are the things which happen outside of him: the sounds he hears, the sights he sees, the objects he encounters. With ripening experience and maturing judgment attention turns inward, and the earth-

quake and the fire are succeeded by the still small voice. Where outward events retain their significance as miraculous it is because they are associated with some outstanding personality, or occur in some unique historic setting. But for later as for earlier ages the world remains vocal, and unsuspected meanings disclose themselves to the man who is on the alert to catch the fleeting messages which are flashed to him across the encompassing night.

It is evident then that in order to explain miracle you must add to man's inherent disposition to ask questions, his faith in the existence of some one who is able to answer them. The miracle faith is a striking witness to man's persistent refusal to believe himself alone in the universe. It is one form—not the only one, but one of the oldest and the most familiar—of that teleological interpretation of life which finds the ultimate cause of things in a rational will in some true sense akin to our own.

But there is something to be added before our account is complete. We have spoken of belief in miracle as having its roots in man's sense of wonder and in his consciousness of enlightenment; but there is another factor still which needs to be taken into account which it is not so easy to define in a single word. Perhaps reinforcement comes as near as any other term to describing what we have in mind. This new factor is not present in all miracles, but in some it is the distinguishing factor. Through miracle man becomes conscious of a fresh accession of vitality and power. It is not simply that his questions have been

answered, but that his resources have been enlarged. A hidden spring of energy has been tapped; the marvel of creation has been repeated before his eyes.

Here we reach the very heart of the religious man's belief in miracle. It is the way he confesses his faith in a God who can do new things, and who is doing them. The questions of religion are never theoretical merely. They spring from a practical interest. Conscious of a hundred needs, outward and inward, the need of healing, of comfort, of forgiveness, of renewal, of enfranchisement, man looks about him for some source of help adequate to his necessity. Is there or is there not some power that can meet his needs, heal his sickness, assuage his sorrow, blot out his guilt, renew his vitality, lift him above the limitations of his environment? Is God, or is he not, alive and free, able to meet present needs as well as the needs of the past, to act here and to act today? Miracle answers this question in the affirmative. It is the point at which God touches man directly in the present. It expresses the creative aspect of religion.

While life remains simple and needs are largely physical, miracle is sought and is found without, in the rain that saves the harvest, in the pestilence that destroys the enemy, in healing for the body, or water smitten from the rock; but where conscience awakes and man, convicted of sin, realizes that his worst foes and his most formidable dangers are within, the centre of interest shifts from the body to the soul. The miracles which evidence God's power most convincingly are regeneration and conversion, and the prayer

in which the miracle faith finds its most fitting expression is that of the Psalmist, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."⁸

With the rise of historic religions like Judaism and Christianity miracle takes on a new significance. It is no longer a matter of individual concern primarily, but of social interest. It expresses God's activity in history and evidences his presence and control in those crises of the national life when great issues have to be faced and new steps taken of permanent significance for mankind. The miracles of Israel's history are associated with great national figures like Moses and Elijah, and those of Christianity cluster about the person of the founder, his birth, his baptism, his public ministry, his resurrection. In the great climax which lies ahead, when human history shall reach its consummation and the Kingdom of God be ushered in, the New Testament writers believe that God will again intervene in direct activity, and that miracles will inaugurate the final advent of the Redeemer.

This wider social reference explains why Protestants have concentrated their attention upon the limited group of miracles recorded in the Bible to the exclusion of those continuing evidences of God's creative and renewing activity which are furnished by the later experience of the church. It is not that

⁸ Psalm 51:10. The connection between these two forms of the miraculous—the outward and the inward—is obscured by the conventional definition of miracle, which restricts it to events in physical nature, reserving other words like the mystical experience, regeneration, or the witness of the Spirit for the inner miracles which are most characteristic of the higher forms of religion.

these are less divine, or that they are less truly miraculous in the sense in which we have been using the term, but that they have a different function in the divine economy. It is a great mistake to speak as though the Protestant confined God's supernatural activity to the past, while the Catholic admitted a continuing activity in the present. To Calvin regeneration was as truly an exercise of creative power as the raising of Christ from the dead. The difference was that the first had significance primarily for the man who experienced it, whereas the second had a unique function in the life of the race. It was God's demonstration in terms that could not be successfully challenged of the messiahship of Jesus, and hence of his divine authority and sufficiency for the religion he came to establish.

The last of the roots from which springs belief in miracle is man's desire for certainty. Miracle, in its more developed form at least, is not simply a wonderful event with a meaning in which God intervenes for man's reinforcement and enlightenment, but an event in which this divine activity is so *patently* manifest as to admit no possibility of doubt as to its author. As distinct from those flashes of insight which come and go, miracle has convincing evidential value. It brings man face to face with God in so direct and first-hand a fashion that there is no possibility of being mistaken as to his identity.

This, too, is the expression of a continuing human interest. Later in its appearance than the other aspects to which we have referred, coming to full self-

consciousness only after life's disillusioning experiences have banished the simple faith of childhood and installed in its room the spirit that questions, the desire for certainty remains one of the most deep-seated and enduring of our human aspirations. Face to face with the insecurities of life—its unanswered questions, its haunting doubts—we long for some refuge from which we cannot be dislodged, some guarantee that the ends to which we have consecrated our lives are rooted in the eternal.

Some have found the authority they sought in an outward standard once for all given—infallible Church or inerrant Bible. Others have hoped to reach their goal by the way of reason and have attributed to the findings of science a finality which Church or Bible could not give. And still others have found the needed assurance within in some intuition of the soul. In those secret and indescribable experiences needing no outward sanction, in which the artist catches his vision of beauty and the patriot surrenders his all at his country's call, the saint has met his God. "Thou hast formed us for thyself, O God, and our soul is restless till it finds its rest in thee." In these often quoted words, voicing the mystic's experience in every age, Augustine points us to what is at once the most direct, the most accessible, and the most successful of all the paths to certainty.

Of this mystical intuition of God, the experience of miracle in its historic Christian form is one of the most notable examples. It is not only in the closet that man has met God face to face, but on the wider

stage of nature and of history. In great institutions like the Catholic Church, reaching back into the remote past and claiming worldwide authority; in great classics, like the Bible, bringing to an age grown careless or inert the consciousness of an undying responsibility and an immortal hope; in great events like those commemorated by Christmas and Easter, marking an epoch in the life of mankind and the source of continuing inspiration for future generations; in great personalities like the founder of the Christian religion, who spoke as never man spake, in words which penetrated all barriers of convention and tradition, and reached the inner citadel of the conscience and the will—in these and such as these God has evidenced his presence in the movement of history, and brought to doubting and unstable spirits, assurance and peace.⁹

⁹ This mystical element in belief in miracle is obscured when we define miracle as an event inexplicable by natural law. The difficulty with this definition is not that it emphasizes the immediacy of the divine activity in miracle, but that it shifts the grounds of our certainty from intuition to logic, and so sets the apologist an impossible task. Such a definition misconceives the real ground of the religious man's belief in miracle. It is not that he can prove of some particular event that it can never be brought under law—a proof which in the nature of the case involves an appeal to the future which precludes present certainty—but that he has had an experience which irresistibly suggests the thought of God. Somewhere in this world of uniform sequences he has discovered God at work and recognized his handiwork. Now the assurance comes to him through the impression of power, as in great natural cataclysms like the earthquake or the tornado; now through the impression of mystery as in those creative processes which bring us face to face with the wonder-worker we call life; and again in some inner quality, no less inexorable because gentle and gracious in its appeal, such as the love which melts us when we contemplate the cross of Christ, or the joy that thrills us in his invitation to a share in his kingly task of service. But whatever the nature of the

These, then, are the four roots of man's belief in miracle: the capacity for wonder, the consciousness of enlightenment, the experience of reinforcement, the longing for certainty; and as long as events occur which arouse this capacity, produce this consciousness, induce this experience and satisfy this longing, we must expect to find men believing in miracles.

appeal, it is always grounded in some antecedent conception of the divine, and as such carries with it its own certainty.

It is clear that if this is a correct account of the genesis of miracle belief, there can be no such thing as a final proof of miracle. The experience by which it is justified is a recurring experience. It repeats itself over and over again in the life of the individual as he faces the old fact in the light of his new environment. It repeats itself over and over again on a larger scale in the life of the race as the impression of the individual in his solitude is confirmed by the new experiences of those who succeed him. In this sense it is true, as has often been said, that it takes a miracle to prove a miracle, and the final proof of the right of the great miracles to hold their central place on the stage of history is the fact that they have been and continue still to be the parents of an innumerable progeny.

CHAPTER VI

FACTS WHICH MAKE FAITH DIFFICULT

1. The Mystery of Good and the Mystery of Evil.
2. How Philosophy Tries to Explain the Mystery of Evil.
3. How Religion Helps Us to Deal with the Fact of Evil.
4. Why Men Continue to Believe in the Good God in Spite of the Fact of Evil.

1. THE MYSTERY OF GOOD AND THE MYSTERY OF EVIL

The doctrines of religion are the expression in symbolic form of convictions which have been forged in the heart of man on the anvil of life. Born of first-hand contact with reality they fulfil their function through the memories they evoke and the experiments to which they invite. There is no religious belief, however strange, which if traced to its source would not be found to preserve the memory of some significant experience. There is none which can be fully understood until it has been illustrated and tested by appropriate action, and this, true of all religious beliefs, is true pre-eminently of those beliefs which have their root in an experience of the miraculous.

Why then if religion meets man in the form of unforgettable experiences, is not religious faith more universal and more steadfast? Why are men religious in such an unequal degree and why, to many of our contemporaries, does the religious life seem strange? It cannot be because religion is unnatural to man. For even the most exceptional experiences have their psychological antecedents and appeal to something deep-seated in human nature. There must be some other reason why, to so many, the religious life makes no convincing appeal.

The answer can be given in a word. That which stands between men and a life of faith in God is the actual contrast between life as we see it and life as we should expect it to be if there were a good God in control. There are theoretical difficulties which make it hard to believe in God and they deserve respectful consideration; but they are only the reflection in intellectual terms of a more basic practical difficulty. It is the fact of evil in ourselves, in others, in the world about us, which makes it hard to believe in the existence and control of a good God.

When we look beneath the surface we find that in our own lives and in the lives even of the most blameless and respectable of our neighbors there are forces which are constantly and actively attacking the good; we meet ambition, lust, greed, envy, hatred, wrath, malice, and all uncharitableness. And in addition to these elements of inward discord we see an unceasing array of exterior evils, sickness, disappointment, frustration, bereavement, and pain. When we ask, as we are forced to ask, why this inner discord afflicts us and why these outward evils befall us, we seem shut up to two explanations. Either there is something in the nature of things which we have not understood and to which we have not properly adjusted ourselves, or there is something in ourselves and others that has gone wrong and has prevented the proper adjustment from being made.

Both these explanations are very ancient. They meet us as far back as we can trace the history of man. The belief that there is something in the uni-

verse to which we have not properly adjusted ourselves lies at the root of the idea of *Maña* in which we see one of man's earliest attempts at an explanation of the supernatural. *Maña* was the name primitive man gave to a quality which attached to certain things or people, giving them a mysterious potency for good or for evil; for good if one could make it his servant and secure control of its power, for evil if he transgressed its laws and incurred the inevitable penalty.

This idea of the supernatural as a quality indifferent to man which might become an instrument of good or of evil according to the use one made of it, explains the rise of the magician and the supposed power of his magic rites.

Magic was a method which man early came to use to protect himself against the dangers by which he was surrounded and to turn what might otherwise be the means of his destruction into an agency for good. The essence of magic is that it works automatically. It produces effects without reference either to the character of the magician or to the moral quality of the influence he seeks to control. It operates by means of charm or incantation and it is based upon man's confidence that when the right means are found the result will follow inevitably. Magic, in this sense, is common both to religion and to science. In religion it represents a primitive stage in which the supernatural, while recognized as a reality which deserves worship, has not yet been completely moralized. The deity is conceived primarily as power, and the awe

the god inspires is the dread which man feels when he is in the presence of danger.

But magic may also be regarded as the precursor of science. Science too aims to control nature in ways which are indifferent to moral values and measures its success by the inevitability of its results. When the practices which the science of one generation has devised are continued after the science of the next has proved them ineffective, we have superstition. Superstition is science out of date.¹

In sharp contrast to the belief that evil is due to a cause which is morally indifferent, is the idea that it originates in a perverted will. This idea also is very ancient, and in the course of history has given rise to many superstitions. Down to very recent times it has been believed that the evils which befall man are due to the activity of malevolent spirits who take pleasure in thwarting him. Against such spirits the only resource seemed to be to call in the aid of other spirits stronger and better disposed. When Jesus healed the demoniacs his contemporaries declared that it was by Beelzebub the prince of the demons, and the reply of Jesus, though it rejects the explanation, does not question the presupposition: "If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out?"²

The conception of a supernatural world which is peopled by spirits which now thwart, now assist man,

¹ It is a great mistake to think that religion has a monopoly of superstition. Even in the most completely secularized circles we find many examples, like knocking wood or being unwilling to sit thirteen at table, survivals manifestly of an earlier age when magic was accepted without question even by highly intelligent people.

² Matt. 12:27.

gave rise to the belief in witchcraft. It long maintained itself even in Protestant circles and explains such phenomena as the persecution of the Salem witches, in whose existence and maleficent powers even so wise a man as Cotton Mather firmly believed. The Roman Catholic Church still teaches that there is an intermediate world of evil (technically called the preternatural) which, although subordinate to God, is not governed by natural law.

With the growth of science and the discovery of the natural connection between events the realm open to the control of evil spirits has been progressively narrowed and the different forms of evil have been attributed to the influence of a single spirit of evil—Satan or the devil. None of the older Protestants doubted the existence of the devil, whom they conceived in personal fashion as a self-determining and self-conscious spirit and to whom they attributed the temptations which lie back of the evil choices of men. It was Satan who, by tempting our first parents, brought about the Fall.

The conception of a personal spirit of evil is in many ways plausible and appealing. It would account, could we accept it, for that quasi-personal aspect which attaches to many of our experiences of temptation, as if indeed some malignant spirit had laid a trap into which our unwary feet might fall.³

Yet the reasons which make it difficult to believe in

³ In Roman Catholic circles it is still the custom in the trials which determine whether the claims of some prospective candidate for sainthood are or are not justified, to appoint some eminent canonist as *Advocatus Diaboli*, to see that the interests of his Satanic majesty are adequately represented.

the existence of demons make it equally difficult to believe in the existence of Satan, Prince of the Demons. These reasons are the result of our growing insight into the unity of nature and of life. However differently we may explain them, evil and good meet us in a context in which they seem inextricably interwoven; and the events which occasion them come to us in ceaseless and apparently inevitable succession. Account for them as we will, they are part of that chain of causes and effects which, taken in its unity, science calls nature. Individual events or persons may be either good or evil; but nature as a whole, when seen in its completeness, must in the last analysis, it would seem, be either one or the other. Either with the pessimist we must see in nature the play of blind, unconscious forces, driving us inevitably, even if unintelligently, to destruction, and so judge it evil;⁴ or, taught by the artist to find unsuspected harmonies

⁴ Thomas Hardy, in his great trilogy, *The Dynasts*, has given poetic expression to this pessimistic view, though Hardy, unlike his more consistent prototype, Schopenhauer, cannot altogether banish the hope, expressed by the Chorus of Pities, that consciousness may at last awake and "fashion all things fair."

Shade of the Earth

What of the Immanent will and Its designs,

Spirit of the Years

It works unconsciously, as heretofore
Eternal artistries in circumstance
Whose patterns, wrought by rapt æsthetic rote,
Seem in themselves Its single listless aim
And not their consequence.

Chorus of the Pities

Still thus? Still thus?
Ever unconscious

side by side with life's sharpest discords, we must think of nature, even in those aspects which seem to us at first sight most unfriendly, as finally and completely good.⁵

For most men the attempt to solve this puzzle proves too taxing and they are content to leave to the philosophers the responsibility for judging of nature as a whole, while they concern themselves with

An automatic sense
Unweeting why or whence?
Be then the inevitable, as of old
Although that *so* it be, we dare not hold!

Spirit of the Years

Hold what ye list, fond unbelieving sprites
You cannot swerve the pulses of the Byss,
Which thinking on, yet weighing not Its thought
Unchecks Its clock-like laws.

Spirit Sinister

Good as before,
My little engines then, will have free play.

⁵ Cf. J. McT. E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence* (Cambridge, 1927), p. 479:

"There may await each of us, and perhaps await each of us in many different lives, delusions, crimes, suffering, hatreds, as great as, or greater than any which we now know. All that we can say is that this evil, however great it may be, is only passing; that our lives are with however much oscillation, gradually approximating to a final stage, which they will some day reach; and that the final stage is one in which the good infinitely exceeds not only any evil co-existent with it, but all the evil in the series by which it is attained. . . .

"Of the nature of that good we know something. We know that it is a timeless and endless state of love—love so direct, so intimate and so powerful that even the deepest mystic rapture gives us but the slightest foretaste of its perfection. We know that we shall know nothing but our beloved, and those they love, and ourselves as loving them, and that only in this shall we seek and find satisfaction. Between the present and that fruition there stretches a future that may well need courage, for while there will be in it much good, and increasing good, there may await us evils which we can now measure only by their infinite insignificance as compared with the finite reward."

those aspects of nature which bear directly upon their personal interests. And here the problem of evil acquires an intimate character which admits of no evasion. Men do not ask first of all, how the evil which befalls them is to be explained, but how to be delivered from its disastrous consequences.

Yet even here it is impossible wholly to escape from the need of explanation. For clearly, our chance of deliverance from the evils which threaten us will depend upon the correctness of our perception of the quarter from which they come. If our most dangerous evils come from without and are a result of maladjustment to natural forces, we shall turn primarily to science for help. If, on the other hand, our chief foes are within we shall see that something radical must happen in us, and our hope of deliverance must be sought in religion.

2. HOW PHILOSOPHY TRIES TO EXPLAIN THE MYSTERY OF EVIL

From the practical question which concerns most men, why a particular evil should befall them and how to be delivered from it, philosophers press back to the ultimate question, why there should be evil in the world at all. In a world where so many things point to the existence of a creative spirit who is the source of all the good that we enjoy, why do we find so much that mocks our hopes and that frustrates our purposes? But even the philosophers have found no new answers. They, too, are obliged to return to

the ancient explanations which seem to belong to the nature of man ; either evil is the result of a maladjustment which is due to ignorance, or to a corruption which has been produced by sin.

Oriental thinkers, on the whole, have accepted the first of these alternatives. They teach that there is a deceptive factor in the appearance of things which involves man in error and which, unless he is delivered by insight, will inevitably condemn him to destruction. Since evil is due in the last analysis to man's failure to understand the environment in which he is living, it is ignorance from which he needs most to be delivered. Without vision the people perish. But if a man can see what must be done, there is hope for his salvation in the end.

In the West, on the other hand, evil has been given a much more positive character. Kant defines evil as the deterioration of moral character which results from a misuse of freedom. When men choose they act as sovereigns, creators either of good or of evil. But once they have chosen, the thing they have brought into existence must work out its inevitable consequences ; if it be good, in inward satisfaction and peace ; if it be evil, in remorse and penalty. Insight alone cannot save an enfeebled will. Some change must take place in man's nature, a change which, of himself, he is powerless to produce. There is no remedy for evil, but a new creative act.

For centuries these two explanations have contended in the minds of men and neither has been able permanently to displace the other ; for each has its

roots deep in human nature and to each something basic in human experience responds. Those who are most insistent upon the part played by the will in man's undoing well realize how often self-deception enters into our moral choices and for the moment gives to evil the appearance of good! Those, on the other hand, who, through detachment from all the ties that bind them to the life of men, seek the insight which will bring them deliverance, well know that moral failure has had its part in producing their blindness and that it is only by moral victory that enlightenment will finally come.

3. HOW RELIGION HELPS US TO DEAL WITH THE FACT OF EVIL

But whether in our explanation of evil we give most weight to ignorance or to sin, we must still face the question whether evil is something ultimate and irremediable. Is it the final fact beyond which we cannot go? If not, from whence is deliverance to come?

Often we are tempted to conclude that evil will be always with us. The causes which produce it are so inwrought into the nature of things that all our strivings seem destined to defeat. Whether we put our trust in the mind and follow after knowledge, or seek self-mastery by the pursuit of virtue, in the end we must face the limitations of humanity. Since to be man is to be finite, and to be finite is to be condemned to imperfection, the Stoic draws the conclusion that evil is irremediable. The wise man, he tells us, will

accept this limitation with an equable mind, since he knows that man becomes truly free only when he surrenders to the inevitable. Characters of great elevation and nobility have been formed by this creed, which still finds its persuasive advocates among our contemporaries.⁶

But for many—and these among the noblest—such resignation has proved difficult if not impossible. There is something in human nature which refuses to be confined within the limits of the human and which drives man with a haunting sense of destiny ever to renew the attempt to transcend his finiteness. This urgent sense of something greater which summons to perfection, finds its most complete expression in religion. Religious faith brings to pass that which reason alone has been powerless to effect. Faith brings man into touch with God, as an enabling and liberating influence. *Through the reinforcement of his powers so received man finds himself able to overcome the evil which is within himself, and he wins from this experience of inward victory, faith to believe that the evil which is without in the world may also some day be overcome.*

Religion's answer to the Mystery of Evil is the greater Mystery of Good. Religion does not ignore evil, much less try to explain it away. It does something better. It conquers it. Through religion we are introduced to a good which, stronger than evil, will eventually master it. Faith calls this victorious factor God.

⁶ Cf. Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals* (New York, 1929).

4. WHY MEN CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN THE GOOD GOD IN SPITE OF THE FACT OF EVIL

We began by asking why men find it so hard to believe in a good God and we found our answer in the fact of evil. We conclude by asking why they are not content to accept the inevitableness of evil and we find our answer in the fact of the good God. This answer has become so familiar through long association, that it is difficult for us to appreciate how revolutionary it is!

Consider for a moment the facts of the case. All through the centuries of man's life upon this planet, whether we measure these centuries by the abbreviated chronology of Archbishop Ussher or stretch them out to the interminable distances by which modern geology reckons time, we find the human race facing innumerable evils—pain of body, sorrow of mind, sickness, disappointment, failure, and at last death. More than this, we find man inwardly divided by the struggle between his better and his baser self. He confesses himself a sinner and in the pages of poet, of novelist, and of playwright unfolds to us the story of his moral weakness and his inescapable remorse. The same story is repeated in the life of the race. The history of mankind is, from one point of view, the story of man's war upon man. It is a story of great powers shamefully misused, of splendid possibilities not only neglected but turned into active engines of destruction. Professor William Graham Sumner was the least sentimental

of economists, yet in a moment of self-disclosure he once remarked to his class:

"Unless it had been for a principle, running through all history and readily discernible by any careful student of history in the large—call it, if you please, Divine Providence, or merely a Corrective Principle—bringing Truth out of Error, Right out of Wrong, and Success out of Failure, the human race would have wiped itself out by its own follies thousands of years ago."⁷

And yet, in such a world, we find men who still believe that controlling it there is a good God. It is not only simple folk who have believed this, tempted, as all of us are, to lend an unwarranted substance to our desires, but some of the acutest intellects of the race—students of religion who, having made criticism their business, have been constrained by the necessities of their thinking to postulate the existence of a God. Nor is it religious people only who believe that a good God is in control. Philosophy, in its great tradition, Eastern and Western alike, is led at last to an ultimate good and in its own way joins religion in a confession of faith in God.

How is this faith to be explained? Why do men continue to believe in God in spite of the fact of evil? The answer has been given many times. It has two parts, one addressed primarily to the intellect, the other to the emotions and to the will.

The theoretical answer is this, that difficult as it is to account for the existence of evil in a world under

⁷ I owe this quotation to a student of Professor Sumner, who was so impressed with it that he copied it verbatim.

the control of a good God, it is easier than to account for the presence of good in a world which is morally neutral or evil.

The practical answer is that which we have already given. When we trust our conviction that God is good and that he is in control, we find that this trust transforms our lives as it has already unified our thoughts. Evils which we once thought unbearable become ministers of good and through our experience of God's power to master evil in our own lives we win a faith in his power to control it everywhere.

We have spoken of the mystery of evil and it would be difficult to exaggerate its mysteriousness. But the mystery of good is greater still. Can we understand such a life as that of Jesus, apart from the Father in whom he trusted? Can we explain the career of a man like Paul if there were nothing real in his conversion experience? The spring does not rise higher than its source. How can that which is unmoral produce goodness or that which is unconscious produce thought?

So men have reasoned from the goodness and meaning they find in human life to a greater goodness and a more comprehensive meaning at its source. At the heart of all the learned arguments devised to prove God's existence (ontological, cosmological, teleological, as the case may be) there lies this basic conviction, that nothing but the good can produce goodness and nothing but the reasonable can give birth to reason.

But this conviction, natural, even inevitable though

it seem, could not continue unless it were accompanied and justified by corresponding experiences. Thought may clarify experience when it is here, but it cannot produce it. Only first-hand evidence of God's power to transform life can give the inward assurance possessed by those who have accepted God's revelation as a fact and who have lived as though God were real.

So as we study God at work in the heart of man it is not only a chapter in human history which we are unrolling, though it is that. We are reading the story of how men have been able to face life's ultimate mystery and its most appalling tragedy and come off conquerors.

CHAPTER VII

WHERE GOD MEETS MAN

1. How God Makes His Presence Known.
2. The Place of Crisis in the Religious Life.
3. Factors in the Crisis We Call Conversion.

1. HOW GOD MAKES HIS PRESENCE KNOWN

The central belief of religion is not only that man is by nature capable of coming into conscious and immediate contact with God but that as a matter of fact that contact has taken place. This conviction persists in spite of the facts and experiences of evil which make faith in God difficult. At what point, we have now to ask, does this contact take place? Where does man find his warrant for the conviction that in religion he is dealing with a reality above and beyond himself which is wholly good? At what point does God meet man?

It may seem hopeless to attempt an answer to this question. How can we pass from the inner world of our own impressions to the transcendent reality which faith apprehends? But the difficulty is not so great as it seems. In principle we make a similar transition whenever we recognize any reality outside ourselves. We do it in the case of nature. We do it in the case of our fellowmen. Even our belief in our existence as personalities with a consciousness that extends beyond the passing moment and has real commerce with other persons in a world that lasts, is possible only through an act of faith. What differentiates religious faith from faith in general is not that it puts us in touch with a reality which transcends immediate experience, but the character of the reality which is thus made known.

The difference indeed is striking enough. God dif-

fers from the other realities that make up our world in that he has no distinctive physical embodiment such as is possessed by the human persons we know or even by that greater all-embracing reality we call physical nature. God is known to us by sense, to be sure, but always mediately through the symbols that suggest his presence and invite to his fellowship.

Yet meet us he must, for were we not made aware of God's presence by some act of divine communication we could never have conceived the idea of God, much less have been able to report what he has said to us.

How then does God make his presence known to man, not simply as an object of thought at which we arrive by inference as we balance argument against argument, but as an inescapable reality whose presence carries conviction? In principle the answer can be given very simply, though a life-time were too short to unfold its full meaning. God makes his presence known with irresistible conviction *in the act of the will by which man surrenders without reserve to the highest he knows.*

When we retrace in thought the long story of man's religious experience, our first impression is of a variety impossible to reduce to symmetry and order. The story of religion is a story of contrasts: the contrast between mystery and meaning; between beauty and righteousness; between justice and love. St. Anthony turns his back upon human society and goes out into the wilderness to win the vision of God in solitary contemplation. St. Paul is sent by the Spirit of

God to crowded cities to preach Christ crucified to men burdened by sin. What is there in common between the creed of St. Francis, who sings the praises of Lady Poverty, and the social Christianity of Lord Shaftesbury or of Charles Kingsley? Did the same God speak to St. Teresa and to Henry Drummond, to Ignatius Loyola and to David Livingstone?

One thing is common to all these witnesses to the presence of God; one quality marks their passage from the self-centred life to their new allegiance. They are constrained by the summons of the most excellent. They have heard a call to surrender, and through obedience they have received inner assurance and peace.

For the call when heard must be obeyed; that is the inescapable condition. The will must speak the deciding word. When the word has been spoken, and not till then, inward assurance follows. First struggle, then surrender; after surrender, peace. But the surrender must be made to the highest known and it must be without reserve.

Many centuries ago, a young man left his father's house in search of something; he knew not what. He had lost taste for the life of ease and pleasure, and longed for some more enduring satisfaction. Often the words of the Psalmist were on his lips: "O Lord, show me thy ways and teach me thy paths." But the desired guidance was long delayed. He spent nights in meditation and days in pilgrimage. All he had he gave to the poor and, as a beggar, tramped the streets of Assisi. But still he was not at peace.

One day, as he was calling upon God, he heard these words: "Francis, everything which you have loved and desired in the flesh, it is your duty to despise and hate if you wish to know my will. And when you have begun this, all that now seems to you sweet and lovely will become intolerable and bitter, but all that you used to avoid will turn itself to great and exceeding joy."

Often in lonely rides over the Umbrian plain, he pondered these words and one day, just as he awoke out of reverie, he found his horse making a sudden movement, and saw on the road before him, only a few steps distant, a leper in his familiar uniform.

Now of all living creatures, Francis' greatest horror was of the lepers; their very odor nauseated him and he would not even give an alms to a leper unless some one else would carry it for him. But now the words he had inwardly heard recurred to his mind: "What you used to abhor shall be your joy and sweetness." This was the time to take the Lord at his word.

Springing from his horse, he approached the leper, placed an alms in his outstretched, wasted hands and, bending down quickly, kissed the fingers loathsome with disease.

What followed is thus described by his biographer. "When he again sat on his horse he hardly knew how he had got there. He was overcome with excitement. His heart beat. He knew not whither he rode. But the Lord had kept his word. Sweetness, happiness, and joy streamed into his soul; flowed, and kept flowing,

although his soul seemed full and more full like the clear stream which, filling an earthen vessel, keeps on pouring and flows over its rim with an ever clearer, purer stream."¹

Six hundred years later, another young man sat in his room in Yale College. A revival was taking place in the college but he had taken no part in it. Though he was a college tutor, and responsible for the students under his care, his intellectual doubts were such that he could not conscientiously make a public profession of religion. But he was not at ease, for he knew that those who were leading the revival had the students' highest welfare at heart, and it troubled him that while other students were joining the revival, his own held aloof. His state of mind and the surrender which eventually brought him peace are thus described by one of his fellow tutors. "Coming into the tutors' meeting one day Bushnell threw himself with an air of abandonment into a seat, and thrusting both hands through his black bushy hair cried out desperately, yet half laughing: 'O men, what shall I do with these arrant doubts that I have been nursing for years? When the preacher touches the Trinity and when logic shatters it to pieces I am all at the four winds, but I am glad I have a heart as well as a head. My heart wants the Father, my heart wants the Son, my heart wants the Holy Ghost, and one just as much as the other. My heart says the Bible has a Trinity for me and I mean to hold by

¹ This account of St. Francis' conversion is taken from Johannes Jørgensen's biography (*St. Francis of Assisi*, English translation by Sloane, London, 1912, pp. 33 ff.).

my heart. I am glad a man can do it when there is no other mooring, and so I answer my own question: What shall I do? But that is all I can do yet.' ”²

What could be more different than these two life stories? One breathes the atmosphere of Catholic piety of the most extreme and ascetic kind; the second is a typical example of the struggle of an acute mind for a rational religion. But the principle in both cases is the same: surrender by an act of will to the highest known. The result in both was the same: inner assurance and peace. Neither Francis nor Bushnell doubted that it was God who had spoken, and their lives reinforced this initial conviction.

Both Francis and Bushnell were following a model set long ago. To a group of disciples seeking the secret of life Jesus explained the principle of peace through surrender. “He that would save his life shall lose it, but he that will lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall find it. For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose himself?”³

It is this principle, so simple yet so exacting, which gives unity to the different life stories which we have used to illustrate the experience of the supernatural. Barth and Buchman, Kagawa and Gandhi, in each case made the final transition from doubt to certainty, by an act of the will through which each surrendered without reserve to the highest that he knew.

² Munger, T. T., *Horace Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian* (London, 1899), pp. 24, 25.

³ Mark 8:35, 36.

2. THE PLACE OF CRISIS IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

The central place thus given to the will explains why the entrance to the religious life so often takes the form of crisis. There seems indeed no inherent reason why this should be so. If, as religious people believe, the life of faith is the life in which man finds his true destiny, it would seem natural that he should enter upon it as early and as inevitably as upon the natural life. And indeed one occasionally meets people of whom this is true. There are men whose experience of the new birth has not been accompanied by strain and stress. Henry Drummond was such a man. Those who knew him best were inspired by his Christlikeness, yet in this rare spirit the sense of strain was almost entirely absent. The life of love, of which he wrote so movingly, seemed as natural to him as the life of self-seeking was to others. Those who met him were moved by the contagion of his spirit, and found it easier to live the life of love.⁴ It was no doubt of such men as Drummond that William James thought when, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, he described the religion of the healthy-minded.⁵

But for most of us religious experience takes an-

⁴ Cf. the testimony of Dwight L. Moody, quoted by Sir George Adam Smith in his *Life of Henry Drummond* (2d ed., London, 1899, p. 9): "No man has ever been with me for any length of time that I did not see something that was unlike Christ, and I often see it in myself, but not in Henry Drummond. All the time we were together, he was a Christlike man, and often a rebuke to me."

⁵ Horace Bushnell, in his epoch-making book *Christian Nurture* (1847), anticipated James in calling attention to the legitimacy and importance of this type of religion.

other course. Even if life brings us no startling tragedy, no sudden fall, it moves on such low levels that the language of great religion is all but unintelligible to us. We do not doubt that St. Paul experienced the wonder-working power of faith, but it never occurs to us that we may experience it too. We may accept every doctrine of the church and repeat the creed Sunday by Sunday with complete intellectual assent, but what it means to confess that the Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life is hidden from us. We live in an atmosphere of convention. We are surrounded by people whose final test of the right life is good form, and we adopt the standards and see with the eyes of those about us. That life may be different, original, creative, revolutionary, is something which does not enter into our catalogue of possibilities, at least for ourselves. Our religion, if we are religious, becomes salt without savor, insipid, tame, unexciting.

Often we pass through crises of another sort. Instead of rising above ourselves we fall below the selves we thought we were. We become involved in conflict with the standards of convention and good form in which we were brought up, and with our own conviction as to what it is fitting for us to do. We find, to our dismay, that we are not one man, but two. In such an internecine strife of spirit it is too often the baser self that comes off victor.

There are two ways of ending such a conflict. One may win from the experience of failure a realization of his own weakness and be impelled to seek for

a reservoir of greater power, or he may persuade himself that what has happened is only human and seek relief from a sense of degradation in the reflection that he has but done what others do.

It is against this background that we must set the life of faith. We can understand now why it should seem unique and wonderful, and why the experience through which it is entered should be so often an experience of crisis.

3. FACTORS IN THE CRISIS WE CALL CONVERSION

There are two well-known similes which religious people have used to describe the nature of the crisis in which the life of faith so often begins. They have called it conversion—a turning right-about-face. They have called it re-birth—a new access of vitality and power. Each describes one aspect of a single experience, an experience at once human and divine. When we speak of conversion, we tell what we do in this new experience. When we speak of re-birth, we tell what this experience has done to us.

Conversion is an experience in which vision leads to consecration, and consecration brings assurance. It begins as insight, it blossoms into commitment, it bears fruit in conviction.

Conversion begins as insight. This is an invariable factor. We may take the blind man's words as a text for all radical conversion: "Whereas I was blind, now I see."⁶ Something is revealed to us that we had not seen before. We perceive a light where all was

⁶ John 9:25.

dark. We hear a voice where all was still. We become aware of an unsuspected presence. Often all three are combined, as in Saul's experience on the Damascus Road.

Insight is followed by commitment. There is something to be done as well as something to be perceived. When the hand is seen, it is pointing. When the voice is heard, it is summoning. Its words are: "Follow me. Come after me." And to the invitation something deep within the personality responds. The hearer becomes a follower; the onlooker a participant. He turns his back upon his old surroundings and, like Abraham leaving his father's home, takes his journey into the strange new country, not knowing whither he goes.

Out of the new insight and commitment there is born a new conviction. Not always at once or without painful struggle, yet in time and with increasing clarity there comes to one who has been obedient to the heavenly vision an assurance that it is not the creation of his own imagination. Some one has been speaking, of whose presence, perhaps even of whose existence, he had been unaware. A hand has been reached out to him which is firm under his touch. A prospect stretches before him of endless beauty and delight. His experience of reality has been enlarged and his confidence is correspondingly increased.

This commitment of the whole personality in response to a summons from the unseen, is faith. Faith is not simply belief, though it involves an intellectual element. Faith is an act of the will by which we

entrust our lives to the control of an unseen yet friendly presence of whose reality we are sure.

It is not only at the beginning of the religious life that we are called upon to make such commitment. Again and again new insights are vouchsafed to us and new decisions must be made. In this sense Barth is quite right when he speaks of the religious life as one that involves continual crisis. There is no stage to which we come in our quest of the higher life where we can stop and say, "I have attained." There is no insight into God's purpose for us or for the world but needs to be supplemented or superseded by later insights. What does it mean to be religious if not to be in continual fellowship with one whose wisdom transcends comprehension and of whose all-embracing purpose we can apprehend, at any moment, but a tiny segment?

But this does not mean that the knowledge which we may possess at any moment is not real knowledge, or that our certainty is not real certainty. There may be crisis, even recurrent crisis, in the religious life; but what proves the crisis to be religious is that it introduces us to higher levels where we enjoy inner assurance and peace.

PART III

WHAT FAITH FINDS IN GOD

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT THE MAN OF FAITH FINDS IN GOD

1. God, the Mysterious and the Meaningful.
2. Meanings Faith Finds in God.
3. God, the All-Sufficient.

1. GOD, THE MYSTERIOUS AND THE MEANINGFUL

Through millenniums men have been finding God. What have they found?

To us of the Western world, taught by Jesus to think of God as Father, the word God suggests a personal spirit, in some true sense akin to us, though infinitely superior, who has revealed himself through the Cross of Christ as redemptive love. But this uplifting and satisfying conception represents an advanced stage of thought. It is the outcome of centuries of reflection and of experience, in the course of which our predecessors in the life of faith, responding by appropriate action to their highest insights, have found their thought of God progressively clarified, and their experience of God progressively enriched.

There is scarcely an object known to man but at some stage of human development has been considered divine. There is scarcely a quality, however grotesque or repulsive, which under some conditions and at some point on man's historic journey, has not been regarded as representative of deity. Yet, through all the changes in man's apprehension of the Divine, three qualities persist which appeal to something deep-seated in man which only deity can satisfy. In God man has found mystery! In God man has found authority! In God man has found sufficiency! God

has been to man mystery that awes, excellence that commands, a spirit that gives life.

First of all faith is aware of mystery. It is wonder which reveals to man possibilities beyond the self of the moment and opens for him a door into a larger life. And, as far as he travels in his search for God, wonder still remains his constant companion. Penetrate the abyss of the Divine Being as far as one may, let one's thought of God blossom into meanings as many as the hues of the rainbow, God remains to the end inscrutable. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?"¹ This remains the last word of faith, as it was the first.

But there is mystery and mystery, and the attraction of the mystery which is God has varied with the character of the worshippers who have felt it. Sometimes it has been the mere fact of strangeness which has fascinated them, the consciousness of the existence of a being whose unfathomable will no man could predict; and sometimes it has been the discovery of light in the mystery, the perception of meanings which while not completely comprehensible by man can yet be felt by the sensitive spirit and communicated to others by means of symbols even if not in explicit words.

Each of these ways of interpreting the Divine Mystery reappears from age to age, and has its roots in persistent and what appear to be permanent aspects of the religious experience. One sort of experience has led men to believe that God is worthy

¹ Romans 11:34.

of worship because he possesses in supreme degree, excellencies which appear imperfectly in man. Another sort of experience has confirmed their conviction that what makes God worshipful is, precisely, the fact that his nature is unfathomable.²

It was the incalculable in God which seemed to our simple forefathers most characteristically divine. There was indeed a part of their experience into which they were able to bring a measure of order. There were some things on which they could count with practical certainty. They did not doubt that tomorrow the sun would rise in the east and set in the west as it had done today, nor that the rock would furnish solid foundation for their building; nor that water would quench their thirst, and food satisfy their hunger. But the things of which they were thus sure were relatively few. About this little island of certainty there stretched a boundless ocean of uncertainty. Wherever they looked—in the brook, in the forest, in the mountains—they seemed to find other spirits at work. And what these other spirits would do could never be foretold, for it was of the very essence of their action to be arbitrary and unpredictable. Wise men avoided these spirits if possible. But if it was not possible, then the part of wisdom was to propitiate them by every practicable

² It is to be noted that these two conceptions of the supernatural correspond to the two conceptions of Nature which we have already distinguished, that which identifies Nature with the physical and that which identifies it with the predictable. Each has its own independent history which can be traced separately. In the first case we think of the supernatural as the meaningful; in the second as the mysterious.

means. Some men were more experienced than others in ways of propitiating encompassing and often hostile spirits. These were the medicine men and soothsayers, and primitive religion consisted in performing the rites which these men prescribed. Even to-day this attitude persists more widely than we often realize.

But we shall fail altogether to understand the appeal which the deity of early religion made to his worshippers if we think of their attitude as determined by purely prudential motives. Then as now there was a quality in the action of the god that attracted while it terrified, and the more incalculable it was, the more divine it seemed.

A Peruvian king is reported to have said that the sun could not be a god because if he were a god he would not repeat the same course day after day. The remark is eminently characteristic. To primitive psychology arbitrary power appears inherently excellent, and the stranger and the more unusual a thing is, the more it contradicts convention and defies public opinion, the more divine it seems. Consistency may be a virtue for the subject, but inconsistency is the glory of the sovereign. To do as you please without giving a reason has been regarded by many sincerely religious people as the supreme prerogative of deity.

Not our primitive ancestors only have felt thus toward their gods. There is something in power pure and simple that possesses for certain temperaments an irresistible fascination. "The sea," George Tyrrell is

reported once to have said, "has done more for my soul than the stars. The heavens in their vastness and eternity are too inferential, too unreal and invisible, too intellectual to help one to rise above contingencies. It needs an act of faith in mathematics and science, and I am not good at acts of faith. But the sea's big-ness and might and ruthless disregard of every human interest, coupled with its wonderful animation and expression and character, would have made me a sea worshipper if I had been in search of a god."

And a greater than Tyrrell has expressed this attitude of combined awe and fascination in a poem which, written nearly three millenniums ago, still voices emotions which the world has not yet outgrown. In the passage which describes Job's contact with the Almighty we find the contrast between the ways of God and the ways of man expressed in the most extreme form. All through the book Job has been asking questions: "How? Why? To what end? Why should this calamity have come to me, of all men? I ask but to serve God and to do his will. Could I but win to his presence with my questions he would answer me and I should be satisfied." And then God shows himself; but not to answer Job's question, rather to ask questions of his own. "Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou send forth lightnings that they may go and say unto thee, Here we are? Hast thou an arm like God and canst thou thunder with a voice like him?"

And Job answers, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.

Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."³

God's answer to man's question is a fresh contact with the mystery which is God. For there is something about the mystery of God which fascinates. In God's presence the worshipper feels his littleness and imperfection, the limitation of his powers, of mind, and heart, and will. He is overwhelmed by the distance which separates him from this mysterious somewhat by which he is confronted and encompassed.

Yet at the same time he is not completely cast down, for there is something about this awe-inspiring reality which irresistibly attracts him. There is a tonic quality in its mystery which is uplifting—more than this, which is entrancing. In its presence man finds his true self. He feels that it is good for him to be there. He is content to be still and to know that God is God.⁴

³ Job 38:31, 35; 40:9; 42:5, 6.

⁴ Among recent writers, Professor Otto has done most to direct our attention to the quality of mystery in God. In his book *The Holy*, he calls attention to the fact that there is a peculiar quality in the religious attitude which, while it has many parallels in other aspects of our experience, cannot be completely identified with them. Our English word "awe" comes perhaps nearest to expressing this quality; but as used in religion it can be understood only in the light of a corresponding quality in the object which calls it forth. Professor Otto has chosen a Latin word to describe this quality. He calls it the "numinous." The numinous is the sacred, or to use his own word—the holy. It combines two qualities—mystery and fascination—which we find elsewhere in isolation.

In his recent book on *The Natural and the Supernatural* (Cambridge, 1931), Professor Oman has pointed out that Professor Otto's use of the word "holy" to describe the distinctive quality in the religious experience does not sufficiently distinguish between two meanings which emerge in the later history—that of the awe-inspiring and that of the adorable. He suggests that it

2. MEANINGS FAITH FINDS IN GOD

But we are not through with the divine mystery when we stop with the awe which it arouses in us. Mere power, however limitless, cannot forever command the conscience. Only the good can permanently deserve man's allegiance. So as the years have passed and man's moral insight has ripened, the identification of the Divine with the arbitrary has increasingly tended to give place to the conception

would help us to avoid confusion if we used two different words to designate these contrasted aspects of the religious experience. He therefore proposes that we confine the word "holy" to the first and use "sacred" for the second. By the holy we should then mean the "numinous" in Professor Otto's first sense of the weird or the awe-inspiring. By the sacred we should mean the worshipful, the adorable (p. 59).

In the supernatural in the sense in which we are studying it here, both qualities are combined. Neither alone tells the whole story. What gives the supernatural its significance for religion is just this, that it is at once awe-inspiring and adorable.

This quality of combined fascination and awe which characterizes the objects of religious faith has many different shadings and is consistent with many different explanations. One of its forms, the earliest and in many respects the simplest to understand, we have already considered. The mystery of primitive religion is the mystery of the unknown. It has its psychological explanation in the uncertainty which is the inevitable accompaniment of a migratory society and of a world view which has not yet attained to any settled unity. But this is not the only possible view of the numinous, even in its most negative and mysterious aspects. There are at least two others which have played a great rôle in the history of religion. One is the mystical conception of God as the ineffable, the other the Calvinistic conception of God as the incalculable. These differ from the primitive view with which we have compared them as being products of a comparatively advanced and critical state of society; but they differ scarcely less widely from each other. The mystery which calls forth the mystic's worship is an æsthetic mystery. He thinks of God as the ineffable, surpassing the power of all language to describe, knowable only

of God as inherently and unchangeably good. The prophets of every age have reiterated this message: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? . . . He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?"⁵ To the herdsman Amos, distressed by the iniquity of his

through an immediate intuition in which discursive thought is left behind and the soul becomes one with the divine in the immediacy of an indescribable experience. The mystery before which Calvin bowed, on the other hand, is an ethical mystery. To Calvin God is inscrutable will, executing upon man and nature a plan conceived before the foundation of the world, to which he has been determined by nothing but his sovereign pleasure.

Each of these conceptions of the divine mystery represents a protest against simpler and more conventional forms of religion. The mystic's view is a protest against a conception of religion that would confine God within the realms of form and number to which alone the exact sciences would limit us. The Calvinist's view is a protest against a conception of religion which thinks to satisfy God with the type of virtue which is in the power of the unaided human will. Each is an attempt to escape from the limits of the relative and the partial and to win direct contact with the God-head in an immediate and ineffable experience.

It is only as we possess this clue that we can understand Karl Barth's distrust of the mystic, with whose emphasis upon the radical contrast between God and man he seems to have so much in common. Barth tells us that in finding God within, the mystic is unduly exalting human nature. But the God with whom the mystic seeks union requires from man as he is today, as great a change as that which is required by the God before whose inscrutable will Calvin bows. In mysticism as in Calvinism, God stands over against the soul and says to the one he would win: "If you would find me, you must deny yourself. If you would live in me, you must die to self." The real contrast lies elsewhere. It is in the nature of the God who is found. The God of the mystic is approached through the æsthetic intuition and his name is Beauty. The God of the Calvinist is approached through the conscience and his name is Righteousness.

⁵ Micah 6:6-8.

people, God showed himself as perfect righteousness. To Hosea, the husband of an unfaithful wife, God was revealed as long-suffering love. To Christians, above all, taught by the example and spirit of Jesus, power, however stupendous, can never equal the majesty of redeeming love.⁶

So, little by little in the school of life, men learned to think of God not only as the Mysterious One, but also as the Meaningful. The mystery that was God was the eternal mystery of goodness carried to the highest degree—the mystery of a person realizing in himself that after which, in their best moments, all men aspire—perfect beauty, complete goodness, even-handed justice, limitless love.⁷

Thus the mystery of religion, here as always, proves an enlightening mystery. Its wonders are signs, and to him who contemplates them in reverence and submission they reveal meanings.

Let us consider somewhat more in detail some of the meanings that faith finds in God. I say mean-

⁶ The contrast comes out clearly in the answer given by Jesus to those who asked him for a sign. They had in mind the kind of marvel on which the representatives of conventional religion relied for their evidence of God. But Jesus refused to rest his authority upon such evidence. He replied that the only sign they needed was the sign which had been given to the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba, who had heard the preaching of Jonah and of Solomon, and he bade them be content with his helpful words and healing deeds. Luke 11:29-32.

⁷ Cf. Dinny's experience, as described by Galsworthy, *Flowering Wilderness* (London, 1932), p. 100:

"And she had a strange and sudden feeling of knowing Wilfred to the very core with all his faults and shortcomings, and with a something that redeemed and made up for them, and would keep her love alive, for in that, in *that only*, was an element mysterious to her. And she thought with a rueful smile: 'All evil I know by instinct! Goodness, truth, beauty—that keeps me guessing!'"

ings rather than meaning; for it is characteristic of man's apprehension of God that all the qualities which appear excellent to man have to the eye of faith their counterpart and foundation in God. These many excellencies—together making up the fullness of the Divine Being—draw from each worshipper a spontaneous tribute of adoration. But because of the persistence and the universality of their appeal, some stand out above the others as mountain peaks tower over the lesser hills. Go back as far as you will and ask worshippers what they have found in God, and when they have passed the stage of thinking of the deity as power only, you will find them giving one of these answers: "I have found in him beauty; I have found in him righteousness; I have found in him love."

When we ask poets and artists to tell us what they have found in God, they answer with one voice, "We have found him in beauty. Only it is a beauty that never was on land or sea, a beauty that in its transcendent excellence, makes our best handiwork seem tawdry." To Wordsworth this sense of a loveliness more than human came through physical nature. To Raphael, God's beauty was revealed in the faces of the Madonna and of the Christ Child. And sometimes all physical media have been inadequate to express the worshipper's sense of the ineffable majesty of deity, and the soul of the mystic has stood face to face with God in an immediate intuition of the divine.

But whatever the special occasion of the experience or the particular form in which it occurs, the

emphasis falls upon the element of contrast. It is the perfection of deity which seems to the worshipper so wonderful, the absence of everything that he finds limiting or enslaving in himself.

It is the mystics who have carried the contrast between God and man furthest. When we ask them to tell us what they see in God, they find no adequate words. But if one were to choose a single word to sum up the impression which their reports produce, it would be beauty. But it is a beauty which transcends sense and has its seat in a secret harmony of the spirit. It is the beauty of which Isaiah was conscious when he saw God "between the cherubim, high and lifted up, and his glory filled the temple"; or that John saw when he beheld the holy city, "New Jerusalem, coming down from heaven to earth, adorned as a bride for her husband."⁸ It is the beauty of holiness, which attracts even while it awes.

Characteristic of the mystical experience of God is the attitude toward time. To the mystic⁹ of the twelfth century or of the twentieth, time is an irrelevance, often an impertinence. For time means change, and change threatens distraction. The mystic longs to see things in the large and as a whole,

⁸ Isaiah 6:1; Rev. 20:1, 2.

⁹ I use the word "mystic" here in the broad sense to include all those whose approach to God is by way of the emotions rather than through the reason or the will—the poets and the artists of religion as distinct from its prophets and theologians. In contrast to these the mystic in the technical sense is the man who attempts to reach the knowledge of God by a process of abstraction through which he diverts attention not only from the ordinary objects of sense perception but from the processes of thought and will as well.

and for such comprehensive vision thought is impotent. For thought in its more familiar and conventional form is analytic. It sees things one by one and one after another. Only the artist can grasp the whole in the parts and by some mystic sense, which is feeling rather than thought, perceive the unity that gives them beauty. Only beauty, which knows no change, since it is always and everywhere itself, can deliver us from the tyranny of time and set the aspiring spirit free.

Some years ago in Rangoon, I expressed to a leading Buddhist my admiration of the Swe-dagon, the great Buddhist Pagoda which dominates the city. "How can you call it beautiful?" he answered. "That only is beautiful which never changes, and this is true of Nirvana alone."

How often the note of permanence recurs in the language of religion:

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever."¹⁰

"For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal."¹¹

"Change and decay in all around I see. O Thou who changest not, abide with me."

There is a poem of Lascelles Abercrombie called "The Trance,"¹² in which the mystic's attitude toward time finds illuminating expression. He is describing one of those moments of sudden ecstasy of which the biography of the saints is full:

b. 13:8.

¹¹ II Cor. 4:18.

¹² Abercrombie, Lascelles, *The Poems of Lascelles Abercrombie* (London, 1930), p. 5.

"Lord God, I saw thee then; one mind, last night,
 Met thee upon thy ways.
 I was upon a hill, alone;
 My drudged sense was aching in amaze:
 Into my thought had too much gone
 The inconceivable room of the blue night,—
 The blue that seems so near to be
 Appearance of divinity,—
 And the continual stars.
 I was afraid at so much permanence,
 And was in trouble with vastness and fixt law.
 All round about I saw
 The law's unalterable fence,
 And like forgery of shining bars
 The stresses of the suns were there,
 Keeping, in vastness prisoner,
 My thought caged from infinity.
 And then, suddenly,—
 While perhaps twice my heart was dutiful
 To send my blood upon its little race,—
 I was exalted above surety
 And out of time did fall.
 As from a slander that did long distress,
 A sudden justice vindicated me
 From the customary wrong of Great and Small.
 I stood outside the burning rims of place,
 Outside that corner, consciousness.
 Then was I not in the midst of thee,
 Lord God?"

It is not only to the poet that God makes himself known, and beauty is not the only excellence that he reveals. When we ask a man of affairs what he has found in God, he will answer, authority—a law to command, a principle to direct. Man is not only an artist, but a builder. He builds, now a constitution, now a character, now a society. He is law-maker and creed-maker, scientist and schoolmaster, explorer and

warrior. If peace is his ideal, he is not content to be a peace lover, he must be a peace-maker. If character is his aim, there are standards to be established, and ideals to be transformed into deeds.

For work such as this time is an essential condition. It is here—in the press and strain of affairs, where life's struggle is fiercest—that the man of action has met his God. It is in time that society arises and character is formed. As society comes to be through the co-operation of many individuals, so character is formed from the repetition of many particular acts. It is in time that lessons are set and learned. It is in time that battles are fought and won. It is in time that men and women make love and marry, bear children and rear them, seek fame and achieve it. It is in time, with its slow processes of growth and of decay, that the seed is cast into the ground, springs up, and at last bears fruit in food, in character, in the Kingdom of God on earth. Without time and its risks and failures, what great achievement would be possible, and what noble story could be told? We cannot think of Jesus without the manger and the Cross, the lakeside with its fishing boats, the great city which broke his heart and which he died to save.

It will not surprise us then to find the literature of religion speaking the language of time no less than that of eternity:

“Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?”¹³

¹³ I Cor. 9:24.

"Forgetting those things which are behind I press toward the mark."¹⁴

"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means after I have preached to others I myself should be a castaway."¹⁵

So in the call to action, as well as through the life of contemplation, God is speaking to man. Wonderful as is the artistry that can bring harmony out of nature's discords, there is something more wonderful still, and that is a conscience which can impose its law upon the discordant impulses of man. In the inner voice which says to the human spirit, "This is right," the prophets of ethical religion, in every age, have recognized the voice of God.

The message of conscience includes two elements which do not always seem to harmonize. Some men who listen hear first of all a summons to righteousness, and others a command to love.

The conflict between the claims of righteousness and the appeal of love has been the theme of poet and dramatist since poetry and drama began. It has to do with two ways of judging the events which occur in the drama of human history and the actors who take part in it. According to one way of thinking, history is the story of individual moral units, each of whom has his own life to live and character to form; and success or failure is determined by the measure to which each conforms to an unchanging

¹⁴ Phil. 3:13, 14.

¹⁵ I Cor. 9:26, 27.

moral law. God, who has given the law, is the judge of man's performance, and in the end will render to every one according to his works.

According to the other way of thinking, history is the story of a society in which individuals, already indissolubly connected, are united in common experiences and common tasks. If one fails, all fail. If one succeeds, all are successful. There is indeed a law which sets the standard, and by his fidelity or lack of fidelity to this each man judges himself and must be judged by others. But it is not the law which is the ultimate driving force in human history and it is not by the keeping of the law that salvation is finally to be won. There is something more basic in human nature, something at once more human and more divine; and that is love. Love binds individuals to one another so that they realize that they are in a true sense members one of another, suffering in each other's suffering, victors through each other's success. It is love, not justice, which must speak the final word in human history; and when justice, true to its unvarying law, has no word to speak but that of doom, redemptive love will find a way to save.

Like righteousness, love has moral quality. Love, like justice, speaks with authority, but whereas righteousness looks back and judges men by what they have done and been, love looks forward and judges them by what they will do and may become. In the one case we have to do with a standard in which the future is determined by the past, in the other with a hope that the past may be redeemed by

the future. "The thing that hath been is the thing that shall be."¹⁶ That is the law's last word. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature."¹⁷ This is the good news brought by the religion of love.

The reason for the contrast is plain. The law is concerned with deeds, and deeds which have been done, at that, and its sole function is to point out the consequences which inevitably and invariably follow from them. But love cares only for the spirit, which is the spring from which deeds flow and which may at any moment start a new stream of influence, revolutionary in its consequences. When God reveals himself to us as righteousness, he stands over against us, confronting us with a standard which we find it impossible to attain. When he draws near to us as love, the springs of our nature are changed. Some secret power within us is released. What once seemed impossible, now becomes possible. What once was hopeless, seems now attainable. We too, receiving the divine love, begin ourselves to love.

Nowhere is the contrast between the two points of view more instructive than in the attitude taken toward suffering. Law sees in suffering the inevitable penalty of violated justice and the necessary deterrent from future wrongdoing. It is something dreadful but necessary, to be shunned if possible, but if need be to be inflicted without mercy. But love sees in suffering first of all opportunity—an opportunity for the gift of self in sympathy, in helpfulness, in healing, in forgiveness.

¹⁶ Ecc. 1:9.

¹⁷ II Cor. 5:17.

It was love of which St. Paul became conscious on the Damascus road. Paul did not need to be told that God is righteous. He knew it only too well. His one aim in life had been to keep God's law, but he had learned by bitter experience that in his own strength he could not keep it perfectly. And then he met Christ and found in him the thing he needed, a creative power which did for him what he could not do for himself. This is what Paul means by the Mystery of Christ—a love which transforms what it touches and brings life out of death. In comparison with this love all else seemed to him refuse, and his whole life thereafter was dedicated to telling what he had found.

To sum up: in their surrender to God, men have found in him beauty, the supreme harmony that resolves all discords. They have found in him righteousness, the unchanging law that sets all standards. They have found in him love, the creative energy that is the spring of all renewal. But the greatest of these is love; for love, and love alone, can bring good out of evil, life out of death, hope out of despair, and can make all things new.¹⁸

3. GOD, THE ALL-SUFFICIENT ;

One thing more faith finds in God, to which, although it is implicit in all that has gone before, it is

¹⁸ It may cause surprise that in this analysis of the meanings which faith finds in God no reference has been made to truth, that august quality which in most philosophical discussions is asso-

not easy to give a name. Perhaps sufficiency comes nearest to expressing it. The man of faith not only finds in God excellencies after which the heart cries out, but he finds them in abundance. More than this, in superabundance. God does not stand over against him in splendid isolation. He is able to do for him all and more than heart can desire. He is not only living, but the Lord and giver of life; he is not only righteous, but the creator of the clean heart in men; he is not only loving, but One whose love kindles answering love in his human children. In God the religious longing finds the satisfaction of all its needs. Through God man possesses whatever heart can desire. God is the giver of every good and perfect gift—able to do “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think.” Of him we read that “eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what good things God hath prepared for them that love him.”¹⁹

If a man lacks knowledge let him ask of God the all-wise, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth

ciated with beauty and goodness as the third member in the trinity of the divine norms. The reason is that truth is an ambiguous term. When used to denote a moral quality in God (veracity or truthfulness), it is an aspect of the divine righteousness. When used to describe that infinite harmony in which thought rests with satisfaction, it is a phase of the divine beauty. But truth, when applied to God, has a more basic meaning. It expresses the fact that in God we have the ultimate reality in which all norms are included and in which every human aspiration is satisfied. Truth, in this sense, is not something different from beauty or righteousness or love. It is our way of saying that in God all these qualities, which in us too often remain aspiration, are perfectly and finally realized. Of all the affirmations of faith, this is the most fundamental, for it is the foundation and guarantee of all the rest.

¹⁹ I Cor. 2:9.

not. If a man needs forgiveness there is no sin but may receive from God abundant pardon. Is it new zest in life which he requires, a recovery of the sense of exhaustless possibilities of interest or of joy? Still it is to God that faith turns for renewal through fresh contact with the inexhaustible source of all life.

And let us always remember that in saying this we are not simply repeating the phrases of theologians. We are reporting what men who have trusted God tell us that they have found in him. The Psalmist tells us that the Lord is his shepherd, because he himself has been led by God through green pastures and beside the still waters and has found the valley of the shadow of death lighted by his presence. When Jesus calls God his Father, it is because in his deepest need he has turned to God for support and has been sustained. Only out of the memory of centuries of such experiences can we understand the triumphant word of the Apostle: "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."²⁰

It is this experience of the creative and recreative power of God, his ability to do for his worshippers, exceeding abundantly, and to be to them the satisfaction of their deepest desire, to which we refer in

²⁰ Romans 8:37-39.

the creed when we speak of the Holy Spirit as Lord and Giver of life.²¹

These various discoveries of mystery, of beauty, of righteousness, and of love in God have come to man through a slow process of education that has lasted for centuries and yielded results to different individuals in varying degree. To one man mystery has been the great word; to another beauty; to another righteousness; to another love. How could it be otherwise with the experience of finite man with the eternal? Yet however hard it may be to reconcile the differing aspects of the divine character and activity, the man of faith has never doubted that in the last analysis it is the same God with whom man has to do. To our shifting vision, ever-changing, as each new need is met by some fresh revelation, God remains ever and always himself.

This truth of a basic unity underlying all variety, finds expression in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. God is the Father in the fathomless resources of whose being all creation has its source, and to whom, when time shall have done its work, all creation shall return. God is the Son, the forthgoing Word, who in creation, in incarnation, and in redemption, reveals himself as beauty, as righteousness, and as love. God is the Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of life

²¹ Attention has often been called to the fact that the doctrine of the Spirit reveals to us no new quality in God. For our knowledge of God's qualities we must look to his revelation through his Son. God becomes *known* to us as he becomes incarnate, but he becomes *real* as by the life of the Spirit he awakes answering response in us. This vitalizing quality in God which makes the word spoken bear fruit in life is what we mean by the Spirit of God.

who, in the hearts of needy and sinful men, wakes the desire for perfection and, in the measure in which they will receive him, transforms them into his likeness. And these three are one God—the beginning and the ending, the first and the last; the same yesterday, today, and forever.

CHAPTER IX

WHY CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE CAN FIND NO PLACE FOR MIRACLE

1. The Challenge of Religion to the Mind.
2. Ways of Justifying Faith in God.
3. How Our Changed View of Nature Affects Our View of the Supernatural.
4. Why Miracle Presents Difficulties to the Scientific Mind.

1. THE CHALLENGE OF RELIGION TO THE MIND

When we report the different meanings which faith finds in God we may easily give a misleading impression, as though we were dealing with rival theories and our aim was to reach a conception of God which should be at all points logical and consistent. It is important, therefore, to say again, even though it has been said before, that the meanings we have been contrasting—beauty, righteousness, love—have not been won in the first instance by argument, but have appeared to those who reported them as insights, carrying with them their own evidence. What gives them significance for us is that they have not remained purely individual experiences, but have been confirmed by the witness of many who tell us of similar discoveries. When we attribute to God beauty, or righteousness, or love, we are reporting what multitudes in all the ages have found in him.

It is only when we try to weave these different aspects of man's experience of God into a consistent picture that our difficulties begin. In our experience there is no necessary inconsistency between mystery and meaning, between goodness and beauty, or between righteousness and love. Yet when we attempt to work out to their logical conclusion the consequences which follow from accepting one or other of these contrasted conceptions of deity we find ourselves

involved in what appear to the mind to be insuperable difficulties. How can the righteous God forgive? How can a world that contains sin be beautiful? How can we reconcile the sorrow and tragedy of life with the divine control? How can we win from the mysteries that baffle us a consistent meaning?

When one is actively at work one may put these questions aside, but the intellect has its rights, and when the day's work is over and we are alone, they knock at the door of the mind and will not be denied. How can we tell that it is really God with whom we have to do and not some subjective imagining born of our desires? And when we have won assurance here, how can we tell which of the many voices claiming to speak for him is the voice to be trusted?

2. WAYS OF JUSTIFYING FAITH IN GOD

When we ask religious people how they can be sure that what they tell us about God is true, some answer that they find their most convincing evidence of God's presence in those intimations of beauty and meaning in the universe and of purpose in the life of man which, recurring from age to age, seem to point to a superhuman author. Others rest their case upon special communications which have been vouchsafed to individual men, either themselves or others.

In theology, as we have seen, these two ways of justifying faith in God have been commonly distinguished as natural and supernatural, and the latter has been regarded as more trustworthy than the former. It is no doubt true that, in the comprehensive

sense in which we are using the term, both ways of God's revealing himself are supernatural. In both we have to do with God, who is Creative Spirit, Lord of nature and of man. In both he makes himself known as a person to persons through evidence which depends for its convincing power upon its appeal to man's sense of the good, the beautiful, and the true. Whether we consider the world as a whole or only a specific event which impresses us as exceptional, what we find is an object which commands our worship; in other words, the supernatural.

But in nature, the theologians tell us, we touch the supernatural indirectly as it is made known to us by inference through reason. In miracle God meets us face to face. On miracle, therefore, we must rely for our convincing demonstration of God's will for man. When reason, balancing the evidence pro and con, leaves us in uncertainty, it is miracle that must speak the final word.

We have seen that the identification of the supernatural with the miraculous in the sense of the arbitrary or the exceptional has been largely responsible for the difficulty which so many modern men find with supernatural religion. To understand how it has come about we must go back some centuries and recall what nature meant to the thinkers who have given us our traditional theology.

Had we been born in the sixteenth century, whether we had been brought up as Catholics or as Protestants, we should have meant by nature some things which the modern scientist means by it, but also some-

thing different. We should have meant by it, as he means, the physical universe so far as it is the expression of invariant laws, and therefore intelligible to our reason. We should have thought of it, again like the modern scientist, as including man, so far as he possesses natural powers which limit and determine his action and in so far forth make prediction possible. But nature would have meant to us something more, and this is the point which it is important for us to note. Nature would have meant *fallen* man, man who by his sin had lost the supernatural powers with which he was originally created and so was incapable of understanding even those truths about God which nature in its other aspect of the intelligible was fitted to impart.

This view of nature was the common presupposition of Christian thinking, Catholic and Protestant alike. It created no difficulty for the science of the day, for it was itself largely the product of that science. It represented the view of the world which had been gradually worked out by the thinkers of the Middle Ages as they tried, with the tools which Greek philosophy had put at their disposal, to reconcile the demands of reason with the insights of faith.

It was Thomas Aquinas, the great thinker and saint, who has been so largely responsible for shaping the thinking of the Roman Catholic Church, who did most to fix the distinction between nature and the supernatural in the form in which it has come down to us. Before his day the line between the general and the particular in God's revelation had been less

sharply drawn.¹ Both the ordinary processes of nature and the exceptional communications vouchsafed to prophets and saints were recognized as ways in which God manifested himself and, therefore, as both alike supernatural. Creation as well as redemption was regarded as the work of grace. Aquinas, trained in the school of Aristotle to see in logic the test of truth, saw contrasts even more clearly than unities. He set nature over against the supernatural as belonging to a wholly different realm, a realm not only limited in power, and hence incapable save by special divine assistance of mounting to the heights of the spiritual world, but possessing imperfectly even those powers with which God had furnished it at Creation, since through the Fall it had become the abode of sin.

In such a world, if God is to reveal himself to man, he must come to him from without. The evidence which reason in its normal functioning would be fitted to supply is no longer available. When God meets man it is by contrast, not by likeness, that he is to be recognized. And such a contrast miracle supplies. In the words of St. Thomas, "miracle is that which goes beyond the power of all created nature. It is that which God alone can do."

Thus to Thomas miracle has a double significance, for the mind and for the will. It has significance for the mind since it not only gives the certainty which reason alone cannot supply, but gives access to those higher mysteries concerning God (Trinity, Incar-

¹ Cf. Professor Gloubokowsky's discussion of the view of Nature in Greek theology, in *The Doctrine of Grace*, ed., Whitley, W. T. (Macmillan, 1932).

nation, Atonement) to which even in its purity unaided reason could not attain. It has significance for the will since it supplies to our sinful human nature, enfeebled and corrupt, the vitality which will enable it to enter upon a new and higher life.

Protestantism inherited from Catholicism this conception of the supernatural as the transcendent, and with it the dualistic view of the world which it presupposes. For Protestant thinkers all reality was divided into two parts, sharply contrasted with each other. One of these parts was nature, the other the supernatural. Nature was a limited realm, limited in space and time, but still more in power and capacity. It was the home of evil, physical and moral. Encompassing nature on every side was the unpredictable, incomprehensible, awe-inspiring world of the supernatural. From it evil was wholly banished and in it God, the All-Wise and the All-Good, was All in All.

Yet the two realms were not wholly separate, for in various ways one impinged upon the other. Catholics believed that God manifested his presence within nature through a supernatural institution, the Church; Protestants, through an infallible book, the Bible. Both Catholics and Protestants believed that the proof of the supernatural was found in certain special happenings of inexplicable character, in other words in miracles.

This conception of the miraculous was certainly an advance on the naïve uncritical conception which it superseded. In primitive religion miracles were taken for granted, but they had no necessary moral

or spiritual significance. They were the acts of wonder-working spirits, good spirits or evil; and what they signified, if indeed they signified anything at all but the whim of a benevolent or hostile being, none could say but a magician or soothsayer to whom had been granted the gift of divination. Compared with such a conception, a conception which dominated the thought both of the Greeks and of the Hebrews, the view of miracle in traditional Christian theology registers notable progress. Arbitrariness has not disappeared, but it is restricted within definite limits and is brought under the control of certain overruling moral and spiritual principles. There are still two worlds, sharply contrasted; yet each has its own laws and both together constitute a system which finds its unity and meaning in the creative wisdom of God. Nature, being the domain of law and accessible to reason, opens a sphere for the cultivation of science in the sense in which we modern men understand that term. The supernatural, while beyond reason, does not contradict it, since God, who is the supernatural *par excellence*, is supreme wisdom and intervenes in nature as he does from time to time through miracle for moral reasons connected with his redemptive purpose.

3. HOW OUR CHANGED VIEW OF NATURE AFFECTS OUR VIEW OF THE SUPERNATURAL

What seemed a reasonable view when science was only in its beginnings and life was full of unexplained

mysteries no longer seems credible to men living in our modern world. We have learned many things that neither Aquinas nor Calvin knew and our knowledge has given us confidence that we may be able to learn still more. For one thing our world has grown immensely larger. When Aquinas wrote his *Summa of Christian Theology* the entire story of our world as known to the physical science of its day could be crowded into a few thousands of years. It began with the first day of Creation, when the Spirit of God brooded over the primeval chaos and at his fiat life and light were born. It would end with the Day of Judgment when Christ would return in physical presence to set up his Kingdom on earth. The world thus limited in space and time included other planets besides our earth and other stars besides our sun, but they were definite in number and, compared with the unimaginable heavens of modern astronomy, were few and near. The universe in which we modern men are living has expanded till the mind grows dizzy contemplating it and the question whether it is to be called finite or infinite has lost all significance for the emotions.

Our world is not only a larger world; it is a different world—at no point more different than in the extent to which contemporary science has bridged, or is in the way of bridging, the contrasts which to Calvin and Aquinas presented an impassable gulf. A mediæval theologian had no difficulty in drawing a line between matter and spirit. He thought of them as two clearly distinguishable substances with incom-

measurable, indeed often with logically contradictory, attributes. Matter had extension and density, divisibility and resistance. It manifested its unchanging qualities through countless physical objects which possessed these properties. Spirit on the other hand was illocal and indivisible and revealed its presence in consciousness and in conscience. The body, as material, was a part of physical nature and had the limitations of matter. The soul was spiritual and was destined for communion with God. Man was a spirit who inhabited a body, and while, by the Fall, he had lost the attributes which made him, as originally created, a supernatural being in the same sense in which God is supernatural, he was destined to recover these supernatural attributes through salvation and to enter his true home in the heavens where the laws of the present physical universe would no longer apply.

For us today it is no longer easy to tell where body stops and spirit begins. There are biologists (like Haldane) who believe that life enters as a constant element into the constitution of the world as a whole. There are psychologists (like Marshall) who believe that every physical change has its mental parallel. Even where contrast is still recognized it is contrast within a larger unity. Whatever the ultimate explanation, somehow, we are convinced, the sides of us that we contrast as body and spirit are parts of one indivisible whole and each is involved with the other in every phase of our experience. Materialists have used this conviction to support the contention that there is only one kind of reality, and

that is matter, but in order to make their point they must endow matter with the characteristics of spirit. It is easy to turn the argument the other way. If reality is all of a kind, it is as reasonable to call it spiritual as to call it physical, since it exhibits attributes found only in spirit.

But the change which has taken place in our thought of nature goes even further. Whatever else a sixteenth-century thinker might question about nature, of this at least he was sure, that you could count on what it would do. In contrast to the supernatural, which was incalculable and surprising, nature's activity, regulated by unchangeable laws, was uniform and made prediction possible. Natural science summed up what reason could tell us about these uniformities and so served to define more clearly the difference between nature and the supernatural.

This view of nature as the uniform and the calculable was long the accepted view in scientific circles. The rationalists of the seventeenth century might let miracles go, but their view of nature remained unchanged. Belief in the uniformity of nature was basic for Newton's physics and has held its sway unchallenged down to comparatively recent times.

How different is the world in which we live! In scientific circles of the highest standing the dogma of the uniformity of nature is called in question. The plea tentatively put forth by William James, who was in his day the *enfant terrible* of psychology, that chance in the sense of pure arbitrariness might have a place in the universe, is now repeated by teachers

of unquestioned scientific orthodoxy.² Free-will, or if this be too human a term to use, the principle of indeterminate variation, dislodged from its seat in human consciousness, has taken refuge in the atom. Ion and electron, in ways that defy the calculations of the mathematicians, pursue their unpredictable paths to emerge at last in the forms of beauty and of order which together make up our world of man and of nature. In our world there seems no longer room for the supernatural in the old sense, for the place which it once occupied has another tenant.

It is difficult to overemphasize the revolutionary character of this transformation. Our fathers, as we have seen, looked beyond nature to the supernatural in wonder, because by nature they meant that which they already understood or which, if they did not understand it already, they were confident that they could master in due time. But today the fact about nature that most plainly stares us in the face is its mystery. Whence did it come? Whither is it moving? What does it portend of threat or promise? These are questions forced on the inquiring spirit by even a superficial acquaintance with nature as it is revealed to us by telescope and microscope and spectroscope, and they are questions which our wisest scientists confess themselves unable to answer.³

² In his essay "The Dilemma of Determinism" (published in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays* (London, 1897), pp. 153 ff.).

³ In his book *The Mighty Medicine* (New York, 1929), one of the most uncompromising of recent attacks upon the traditional view of the supernatural, Professor F. H. Giddings distinguished three kinds of mystery.

"Mystery of the lowest order," he tells us, "is casual. It occurs; it just happens to be. It is the mystery of the undisclosed, of the not

We face not simply an intellectual change but an emotional change as well. The attitude in which the modern scientist confronts nature is an attitude of mingled humility and faith which has its closest parallel in religion. Nature is no longer for him a narrow realm which his intellect can compass. It is the mysterious source of all values and of all excellencies. This emotional change quite as much as the intellectual change has made the old use of the terms "nature" and "supernatural" not so much false as unmeaning.

4. WHY MIRACLE PRESENTS DIFFICULTIES TO THE SCIENTIFIC MIND

It is inevitable that in such a world the argument from miracle in its older form should present all but

found out, but presumably discoverable. . . . Mystery of a higher order is adherent. It is something adventitiously attached to reality to give it a significance which does not really belong to it. Like a yellow fog it clings to the relationships and goings on which constitute the environmental world. It is dear to occultism because until dispersed by natural knowledge it can be exploited by practitioners of pow-wow (including holders of academic degrees) with increment of vain-glory and affluence; and it is dear to naïve supernaturalists because, as they will tell you, cosmic fog is a substance of things hoped for, an evidence of things not seen."

But we have not done with mystery, Professor Giddings reminds us, when we have rid ourselves of these familiar varieties of it. There is still a third kind of mystery which it is impossible to banish because it is inherent in nature itself. "It is the mystery of being, of objective reality and of conscious experience; of noumenon (to use the philosopher's word), in distinction from phenomenon. It has never been resolved, and there is no reason to suppose that it ever will be. It is the mystery sooner or later arrived at by the scientific inquirer, who bows before it." (*Cf.* p. 6.)

Cf. also the closing words of Dampier H. Whetham's *History of Science* (Cambridge University Press, 1929):

"Sooner or later intelligible mechanism will fail and we shall be left face to face with the awful mystery which is reality."

insuperable difficulties. These difficulties are in part intellectual, in part moral. They are in part the result of more accurate knowledge of the phenomena which religion has interpreted as miracles, in part the expression of a change of emotional attitude still more fundamental.

Let us take the intellectual difficulty first. To establish the occurrence of a miracle, whether in the thirteenth century, or in the sixteenth century, or in the seventeenth, it was necessary to show that the event in question was incapable of being explained by natural law. This, though difficult, would not be impossible provided one knew just what was meant by "nature" and what events were explicable by natural law. But today we are no longer sure that we know where to place the exact boundaries of natural law. Natural law is only our name for certain recurrent sequences in the order of the occurrence of phenomena. Nature is not an independent power over against God which acts as a cause among causes. Nature is that part of the totality of things which admits of classification according to principles which embody the results of an analysis of past experience. To prove that an event is a miracle in the sense in which Aquinas or Calvin believed in miracle, it would be necessary not merely to show that it had not yet been possible to assign it its place in any observed sequence, but that it never would be possible to do so in the future, which manifestly cannot be done.

Many modern opponents of miracle are content to rest their case at this point. They do not deny the

possibility of miracles, but only the possibility of proving that any particular event is a miracle. Take any of the miracles of the past, the virgin birth, the raising of Lazarus, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Suppose that you can prove that these events happened just as they are claimed to have happened. What have you accomplished? You have shown that our previous view of the limits of the possible needs to be enlarged; that our former generalizations were too narrow and need revision; that problems cluster about the origin of life and its renewal of which we had hitherto been unaware. But the one thing which you have not shown, which indeed you cannot show, is that a miracle has happened; for that is to confess that these problems are inherently insoluble, which cannot be determined until all possible tests have been made.

What, moreover, shall we say of those events, formerly deemed miracles in the technical sense, which today many scientists believe can be brought under law? For example, the miracles of healing or of demonic possession? We find analogous phenomena at the present day which seem to belong in the same category, such as the healings of Christian Science, or the exorcism of Christian missionaries in China.⁴

⁴ Cf. the account of Mr. Leng's experience, given in Nevius, John L., *Demon Possession and Allied Themes* (London, 1897), pp. 34, 35.

"When we arrived at the village a large company were assembled at Mr. Sen's house, attracted by the disturbance, and curious to see the result of it. After a time I went into the north building where the two raving women were sitting on the K'ang. I addressed the demon possessing them as follows: 'Do you not know that the members of this family are believers in the true God and this is a place used for his worship? You are not only disturbing the peace of this

Must we, therefore, admit that the religious significance of the Biblical stories has been impaired and the evidential value of the events they record has been disproved? Such a conclusion would inevitably follow if the older methods of proof were correct. But modern defenders of miracle are not willing to admit that this is the case. The religious significance of the Biblical miracles, they tell us, is not impaired by any progress which we may have made toward a scientific understanding of their antecedents, for the very simple reason that the quality which gives them their significance for religion lies in a region to which the methods of science cannot penetrate.

This suggests a second and even more serious objection to the older conception of the miracles, namely, that it overlooks the real ground on which belief in their religious significance rests. The defense of the historic miracles as formulated in official textbooks of theology appears to be a purely intellectual matter, a marshalling of arguments for or against. But we have seen that religious conviction is never the result of logic alone. Into all faith worthy of the name there enters a moral element. The appeal is made to our sense of value, and assent involves an act of the will as well as of the mind.

The miracle faith of the past, so far as it has involved genuine religious conviction, was never wholly

house but you are fighting against God. If you do not leave we will immediately call upon God to drive you out. . . . ? So the Christians all knelt down to pray. The bystanders say that during the prayer the two possessed persons, awaking as from sleep, looked about and seeing us kneeling quietly got down from the K'ang and knelt with us."

intellectual. The arguments of the theologians are the mistranslation into intellectualistic terms of intimate and immediate experiences. In the events deemed miraculous qualities appeared which carried instantaneous conviction and, therefore, it was not necessary to appeal to the future for proof of their miraculous character. In miracle, God evidenced his presence with the same immediacy as the sun its light, or the sea its motion. What Tyrrell felt when he looked at the sea, our fathers experienced when they contemplated the miracles. They felt themselves in the presence of something vast and mysterious, a power startling in its manifestation, resistless in its will, fitted therefore to call forth that highest worship and that supreme surrender which belong to God alone.

It is only when we take this emotional element into account that we can appreciate the radical nature of the change which has taken place in our attitude toward the supernatural. We not only think differently about the miraculous, but we *feel* differently toward it. The miracles that seemed to our fathers marvellous, no longer call forth our wonder, not because we believe that it is impossible that such things should happen, but because they would not seem to us significant if they did.

Thus in our modern world the position of nature and the supernatural is almost exactly reversed. Nature was once considered an island in the boundless sea of the supernatural. Now the supernatural, so far as it is admitted at all, is a lake, or at most a net-

work of lakes and rivers within the vast continent we call nature. Once the supernatural had to be added to nature because matter as man understood it was lifeless and inert, and a creative spirit was needed to account for the instances of variation and initiative of which the world was full. But now nature itself is nothing if not alive, and emergent evolution must be recognized as a fact whatever the theory by which we explain it. Once the supernatural was required because without it man could find in life as it is lived by men no object worthy of his admiration and deserving of his trust. But now nature itself is acclaimed as the home of ideals and offered to us as a fitting object of worship.

It is not easy to exaggerate the importance of the issue which this change presents to modern thought.

CHAPTER X

WHERE CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY IS REDISCOVERING THE MIRACULOUS

Why Nature Alone Is Not Enough.

Two Ways of Knowing Reality.

What It Means to Be a Person.

Why Purpose in God as Well as in Man.

Different Ways of Conceiving Personality in God.

Why Religion Cannot Dispense with Miracle.

1. WHY NATURE ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH

Our survey of contemporary thought has brought us to the singular result that in our modern world the position of nature and the supernatural has been almost exactly reversed. It has shown us that nature, at first a comparatively narrow realm, surrounded by the boundless sea of the supernatural, has now become for many modern writers a comprehensive term which includes all reality, actual as well as possible, and the supernatural, where admitted at all, stands for a particular and so far forth limited aspect of that all-embracing reality.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find some of our contemporaries concluding that since nature, as modern science has revealed it to us today, possesses so many of the qualities which in earlier ages were confined to God, we no longer need a personal God to provide a satisfying object for our worship. Thus Professor Dewey, to take but a single example, finds it possible to deliver on a foundation devoted to natural theology a course of lectures in which the name of God scarcely appears. Nature as he defines it possesses many, even if not all, of the qualities which we have described as supernatural. It includes the conscious as well as the unconscious, the novel as well as the predictable, the ideal as well as the actual. For this reason Professor Dewey can say of nature that "when it is conceived as including humanity, with all its defects and imperfections, [it] may evoke heart-

felt piety as the source of ideals, of possibilities, of aspirations on their behalf and as the eventual abode of all attained goods and excellencies."¹

It is no new thing in philosophy for the words "nature" and "God" to be used interchangeably. Spinoza, who has been called "the God-intoxicated man," discovered in the universe qualities which called forth his highest reverence; and Schleiermacher, who more than any theologian of his day emphasized the experimental basis of religion, often used God and the universe as interchangeable.

Shall we then dismiss the supernatural altogether, and, having dislodged theology from its old home beyond the stars, make for it a place as a part of natural science, that part, namely, which deals with the aspects of nature that are meaningful, creative, and awe-inspiring? Simple as such a solution seems, there are certain considerations which may make us pause.

One is the fact that while the broader use of nature to include all reality is common, it is by no means universal. To most scientists, indeed to all of them while they are functioning as scientists rather than as philosophers, nature still retains its narrower meaning. They mean by it that part of the world, and that part only, which can be measured with exactness. Whether there is anything that lies beyond, may be a legitimate subject of speculation; but that is the concern of the philosopher or the theologian. To the physicist or the chemist, nature means the realm of the measurable.

¹ *The Quest for Certainty* (London, 1929), p. 291.

So long as we use nature in this restricted sense the word "supernatural" remains as appropriate as before. Indeed we may go further and say that it is indispensable. We need some term to remind us that the reality of our universe is not confined to that aspect of it which the exact sciences study, nor is our trustworthy knowledge of it limited to what they are able to measure or to predict. Our world includes persons as well as things, capabilities as well as achievements, ideals as truly as actualities, and so long as we define nature in terms that leave these out, common honesty requires us to affirm the reality of the supernatural. What differentiates our view of the supernatural from that of our predecessors is not that we no longer have a place in our universe for the spiritual and the creative but that we find these qualities more widely present than our fathers did, and in our estimate of the particular phenomena which are presented to us as divine we give preference to those that are meaningful over those that are merely mysterious.

2. TWO WAYS OF KNOWING REALITY

More is at stake here than the choice of words. Under the two uses of the term "nature" two different ways of apprehending reality find expression. One gains its knowledge of the realities it studies through the logical understanding and conceives of it as composed of similar elements, many or few,

which lend themselves to analysis and classification. The other apprehends reality as a whole, or a collection of lesser wholes, each possessing an indeterminate quality, only to be apprehended intuitively through judgments of meaning, of purpose, and of value.

Both approaches are scientific; but the word "scientific," when applied to one approach, has a different meaning from that which it has when applied to the other. In the first case we use it in a restricted sense of an attitude toward life which, however logical, is partial and inadequate, that, namely, which is illustrated by the procedure of the so-called "exact sciences," whose only test of truth is mathematical. In the other we use it in a broader sense to distinguish thinking that is accurate, impartial, and consistent, from the less careful intellectual procedure which is sufficient for the needs of every day. Science in the first sense is an affair of the specialist, but every one who is conscientious in his thinking ought to aspire to be scientific in the second sense.

So long as we realize clearly what we are doing, the restricted approach which is characteristic of science in its narrower use is all to the good. It concentrates our attention upon aspects of the real world that we might otherwise overlook. It helps us to eliminate the adventitious and the irrelevant. It develops a technique which in its thoroughness makes demands upon us that are moral as well as intellectual. No view of the supernatural can hope to maintain itself in our modern world that does not make place for and even

welcome gladly all that the exact sciences can teach. One of the most disastrous mistakes of historic theology has been that it has so often either ignored these teachings or tried to evade them by appeal to some external authority which has prejudged the case.

But when we go further and assume that all that we can know about reality is exhausted by what the exact sciences can tell us about the processes by which our experience of reality is conditioned, we cease to be scientific and simply substitute a new dogmatism for the old. This is not the way in which we treat the physical universe, the reality of whose existence and significance for man we are least in doubt. No scientist worthy the name believes that our knowledge of the universe is exhausted by what physics and chemistry can tell us about the succession of its phenomena and the nature of its laws. The greater he is, the more apt he will be to remind us how inadequate is his understanding of these laws and how necessary it is that the inaccurate generalizations of one generation should be corrected by the fuller knowledge and the more accurate observation of the next.

In the meantime, while we await the results of these future studies and hold our minds open to the changes in our thinking which the redefinition they make necessary will require, there is another approach to nature which is quite as legitimate and no less important. We know nature through the uses it serves and the satisfactions it makes possible, and the knowledge thus gained is even more permanent and trustworthy. When the layman in science reads the books

of astronomers like Eddington and Jeans or tries to penetrate the mathematical theories of an Einstein or a Whitehead, he finds his head swimming. When he hears a physicist like Millikan declaring that every single basic conception of the physics of Huxley and Tyndall has been outgrown, he wonders whether there remains any firm ground in this shifting universe on which he can securely build. But when he stops trying to understand the theories of the scientists and is content to follow the practical advice they give he finds that the results which they promise follow. Still as in the days of Newton, and in the days of Ptolemy before him, and in the days of the first philosopher who conceived the concept of nature, whoever he may have been and however crude may seem to us his picture of the world, man finds himself living in an environment which presents definite characteristics to his senses, groups its happenings in recurrent sequences on which he can count, and lends itself in greater or less degree to his control. So the great fact or group of facts we call physical nature evidences its reality not simply, or even chiefly, because it presents a consistent picture to man's mind but because it affects his daily life in familiar and usable ways.

The contrast which meets us when we try to understand nature reappears in our study of man.

We may regard man as a part of the physical universe, subject to certain definite physical laws which can be discovered and classified and which, when exact, make possible prediction. And we may use our knowledge of these laws to guard against certain

dangers and to acquire certain skills. This is the method followed by modern scientific psychologists, of which the "behaviorism" of Professor Watson² is an extreme example.

But we may admit all that the behaviorist psychologists can tell us about the relations of consciousness to its physical antecedents and concomitants, and find it entirely compatible with our faith in real persons who love, labor, sacrifice, sin, repent, and are worthy of our friendship, confidence, and affection. And when we pass from the laboratory of the behaviorists to their homes and their clubs we find that this is in fact the way that they think of men and women and act toward them. Much as may be learned from the studies of the specialists in history and in psychology which is not only interesting and illuminating but may also prove practically helpful both in warning us against dangers and in suggesting helpful methods of organization and practice, there is one thing they cannot do for us. They cannot give us first-hand certainty that the men and women whom we touch in daily life are worthy of our love and trust. That can come only through immediate experience as we trust the intimations that come to us from our deepest insights and move courageously toward the goal to which they seem to point. Reality, whether it be of a stone, or of a flower, or of a person, or of the eternal God, is the one thing that you cannot prove. You must accept it by natural piety or you will never reach it at all.

² Watson, John B., *Behaviorism* (New York, 1925).

3. WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A PERSON

It is when we concentrate on the study of personality that the proposal to substitute the term "nature" for "God" most clearly betrays its weakness. For that proposal tends to obscure the most crucial of all the questions with which religion confronts us, the question whether we are to think of the object of our worship as unconscious, or, if conscious, as possessing only that limited form of consciousness which we know in ourselves; or whether with the theists of all the religions we are to think of God as a being with consciousness, character, and will, differentiated from nature as creator from creature, transcending nature as purpose always transcends the instrument of which it makes use: hence able to enter into relations with us, who are persons, which admit of understanding as well as reverence and of loyalty as well as submission.

This issue is confused by the fact that in the type of philosophy to which we are referring man occupies a dual position with reference to nature. Now he is spoken of as a part of nature, subject as such to all the limitations which that relationship imposes; and again he stands over against nature as a thinking, willing being, sitting in judgment upon the mother who has borne him and trying, by the ingenuity with which his intelligence furnishes him, to refashion his environment in forms that correspond more nearly to his own ideal of the good.

Thus the contrast between nature and the supernatural from which we tried to escape by dispensing with God reappears in accentuated form in connection with man. As pictured in contemporary humanism, man is at once a child of nature, and so imperfect, and a being who transcends nature, and so deserves our reverence—most of all for this, that in him we see thought pursuing its creative work.

What is this but to reaffirm the supernatural? What science in the pursuit of its narrow function as a measuring rod has been constrained to eliminate, philosophy in its search for meanings is rediscovering in persons. What is it to be a person if not to be a being who perceives meanings, apprehends values, and through the exercise of intelligence and will brings new things to pass? To be a person means to be a creator, one who out of the raw material he finds gives shape to objects which possess beauty and meaning, and so make social intercourse possible with other persons.

It is to the credit of the thinkers we have been criticizing that they have rediscovered the central significance of personality for the understanding of reality. It is their weakness that they fail to draw the natural conclusion from this discovery. Partly as the result of a mistaken conception of relativity, which assumes that the relative excludes the absolute, partly as a protest against conceptions of the supernatural which are untenable in fact, they would limit the creative process to the human form in which we find it in ourselves. In default of any cosmic God

they would worship man. But man, however we idealize him, remains partial and finite and the ideals of perfection which he presents for our appropriation are conflicting and often contradictory. So far therefore as we limit ourselves to humanist religion, we abandon hope of the unity which is the ideal of natural science. Humanists, if they are consistent in their thinking, must content themselves with a pluralistic religion which, for all its air of modernity, carries us back to the world of prehistoric man.

It seems a curious thing to say of Professor Dewey and those who think with him, that they are believers in the miraculous. Yet what other interpretation can we give to a view of the world which thinks of nature as at once unconscious and as giving birth to thought and of human beings who are themselves a part of purposeless nature as acting according to purpose? The very name given to this type of philosophy, "instrumentalism," is unmeaning if creation be not a fact. How great a being must he be who in the workshop of his brain can turn that which in itself is meaningless and useless to meanings and uses.

Only these meanings and these uses remain partial and incomplete. They have no divine pattern after which they are modelled. They correspond to no abiding reality after which they aspire. Like the miracles of the savage, they remain isolated happenings, each having its justification in the need of the moment, but without inner coherence or cosmic harmony.

The devotees of the exact sciences do not so conceive their relation to ultimate reality. In the pursuit

of their aim they try as far as possible to abstract from the subject matter of their study all those elements of valuation and appreciation which lend color and variety to life. Yet in the intellectual field, in which alone they profess to operate, they postulate an ultimate principle of order which brings unity and harmony into phenomena and which makes it possible for each new student to build confidently upon the results of those who have gone before. To the scientist, whatever his special field of study, truth is not many, but one; and although he can never hope to grasp it completely, still he is confident that it is there, and his faith gives interest to his search and makes its results, so far as attained, significant.

Why is not a similar assumption legitimate in connection with that other side of reality which can be approached only through our judgment of values? As soon as we stop collecting facts and attempt any significant interpretation, we must assume standards by which to estimate the meaning of what we observe and distinguish it from other objects of our study as desirable or undesirable, beautiful or ugly, right or wrong. Why in this case only should we seek our standards wholly within ourselves? Why not assume that our limited and imperfect judgments are themselves approximations of a reality greater than ourselves? Why not add to our postulate of an ultimate truth that of an eternal beauty and of an inherent excellence?³

³ In a suggestive study (*Theism and the Modern Mood*, New York, 1930), Professor Horton has recently pointed out that the humanist denial of any cosmic foundation for our human judgments

4. WHY PURPOSE IN GOD AS WELL AS IN MAN

It is a significant fact that at the very time when many psychologists and sociologists are doing their utmost to banish purpose from the field of consciousness where it lies nearest at hand, students of physical science in increasing numbers are rediscovering purpose in the universe. It is quite true, and no one recognizes it more clearly than they, that any attempt to *demonstrate* a cosmic purpose by the methods of exact science is bound to fail. It did not need the elaborate argument of Kant to make this clear. But it is equally true that when we seek a satisfying *explanation* of the phenomena with which science confronts us in our study of the world, the one that presents the least intellectual difficulty is that of theism. We find mathematicians like Whitehead, astronomers like Eddington, physicists like Pupin and Millikan, biologists like Thomson and Lloyd Morgan reaffirming the reality of the supernatural, not in the limited and pluralistic fashion which is all the humanists are ready to admit, but as a cosmic fact which alone gives an adequate basis for the lesser values that we discover in our human lives.

of beauty and goodness has proved increasingly difficult to maintain. Its advocates are under fire from two opposite quarters. One of the opposing views, that represented by Mr. Wood Krutch and those who think with him, involves the complete abandonment of value in any form and so requires a final break with supernatural religion. The other, which is shared by an increasing number of our contemporary physicists, mathematicians, and astronomers, carries the discovery of value and of meaning beyond man to nature as a whole and so opens the way for the revival of supernatural religion in its theistic form.

The reasons which have led to this reaffirmation are familiar and have been presented in books of such authority that any repetition here is needless.⁴ They may be summed up by saying that wherever we look, in the universe as a whole, on our planet with its comparatively brief astronomical history, or in the life of man who inhabits it, we find new phenomena appearing which, however dependent they may be upon their antecedents, cannot be wholly accounted for by them. There is evolution, and there are laws of evolution: but it is emergent, and in its most significant and outstanding phenomena appears to us creative. It is creative not only in the sense that it cannot be wholly accounted for by its antecedents but in the sense that now that it is here it lends itself to uses, takes its place as part of a larger pattern, and gives birth to elements which without its presence could not have been. How shall we account for this amazing phenomenon? What better answer can we give than was given by the Psalmist three thousand years ago? It is because God has been at work. The universe is his handiwork, serves his purpose, and reveals his will.

What physicists and biologists discover when they study the history of the universe as a whole, historians assume when they retrace the story of man's life on earth. Here again there can be no question of proof. That there is any meaning in human history

⁴ A convenient summary of the reasons why mechanism furnishes us with a less trustworthy category than personality for our approach to reality may be found in Streeter, B. H., *Reality* (New York, 1926).

other than the conflicting purposes of the men and women who may at any moment of time be actors in its drama, is an assumption which we bring to the reading of that history from our faith in the meaning of life as a whole. Step down from the stage to the auditorium, as many of our thinkers and men of letters have attempted to do, and it becomes easy to see in history simply the play of blind forces working out their meaningless processes on the human puppets who are helpless in their hands. But of this we can be sure, that if, when the call comes for action, we carry back that viewpoint with us from the auditorium to the stage, life loses its significance, and motives that give zest to activity are withered at the root. It is not thus that the men and women who have achieved most greatly have thought of history and it is not by this standard that those we consider the greatest have measured their achievements. To them, as to the thinkers who find a purpose in nature, something is happening in history. An ideal excellence is being pursued. A divine plan is being worked out. There is a far-off divine event toward which the whole creation moves.

5. DIFFERENT WAYS OF CONCEIVING PERSONALITY IN GOD

It is only against this background that we can understand the real significance of theism as an attempt to give consistent intellectual expression to man's highest thought of God. Theism, as is well

known, is the view which thinks of God as personal; or in other words as a being having self-consciousness, intelligence, and will, and therefore in some true sense like ourselves. But this of itself carries us but a little way, for there are many ways of thinking of personality; and personality, even in ourselves, is in constant process of change. To say of God that he is personal is to use a word which is itself in need of definition.

One meaning of personality, the most obvious, we have already mentioned. To say that God is personal may mean that when we try to picture to ourselves what he is like we must seek our symbols not in physical nature but in our own self-consciousness. For in consciousness, and in consciousness alone, we find the ideals which call forth our highest worship—beauty, righteousness, and love. This need not imply that we think of God's consciousness as in all respects like our own, or even that we can make any definite picture of what it is like. But it does imply that when we look for some analogy by which to make more vivid to our imagination the reality of which we believe ourselves to have first-hand experience, it is to our own spirits that we must look, since it is spirit and spirit alone which is the home of the ideal.

Again we may mean by calling God personal that he is not limited as we are by time and sense, but that he is able to make these, instruments of his purpose. Men often speak of the personality of God as though it were a limiting conception, confining God to the

meagre possibilities which alone are open to us as men.⁵ But its true significance is just the reverse. The characteristic thing about personality as we know it in ourselves is not that it is limited—that is common to all finite and relative existence—but that it succeeds, at least in part, in transcending its limitations. What is science but a way of overcoming the barriers which are set for thought by space and time? What is art but a similar transcendence in the realm of feeling? We are not persons all the time. Only in our best moments are glimpses given to us of the larger world just across the veil, the moments when, awed by some great thought or thrilled by some rare beauty, we lose for an instant our sense of the limitations of our humanity and enter the supernatural world toward which we aspire. When we say of God that he is personality, we are not limiting God to such fleeting experiences of transcendence. Rather are we confessing our faith that what in us is potential to him is actual, and what in us is occasional in him is constant.⁶

But personality when attributed to God may mean something that touches us more closely than this. It

⁵ Professor Wieman's denial of personality in God (*The Christian Century*, March 2, 1932, pp. 283, 284) is based upon the assumption that the only possible form of personality is the narrow and limited one which we know in ourselves. But this is not the sense in which the word personality has been used by the great theologians, to whom we owe the classical conception of God. Cf. Webb, C. C., *God and Personality* (Aberdeen, 1919).

⁶ Thus Ritschl in his book *Justification and Reconciliation* (English translation, Edinburgh, 1900) takes the view that in the strict sense of the term there is only one personality—namely, God. We are imperfect personalities, approximating the divine ideal in varying degree, but never attaining it. Cf. pp. 220

may mean that we think of him as essentially a social being, realizing his own nature most completely as he communicates himself to others. Personality, as the sociologists are constantly reminding us, is a conception which has no meaning apart from society. To be a person means to share oneself with others and to find oneself in them. It means, in a word, to become vocal and, what is more, to speak words that are understood.

Here we pass from the academic side of religion to its intimate and practical aspects. When we say of God that he is personal we express our faith that he is one who is not content to remain in isolation but that he is speaking to men, and speaking so that his message carries home.

6. WHY RELIGION CANNOT DISPENSE WITH MIRACLE⁷

We see now the true significance that miracle has for religion and why, in religion that conceives God in personal terms, it can never be outgrown. For miracle, as religion conceives it, is never a wonder simply; it is also a sign. It is not simply the fact that something strange has happened, still less something that science cannot bring under natural law; but that something has happened that gives light where there had been darkness before and joy where sorrow had had sway. Miracle, in a word, is the ex-

⁷ Some paragraphs of the section that follows originally appeared as part of my Dudleian Lecture for 1915, *op. cit.*, pp. 298-322.

pression in the larger field of the universe of that creative aspect of things which meets us whenever we touch life, and most clearly of all in personality.

But if miracle is thus a correlate of our conception of personality, it is evident that our theory of miracle will be affected by whatever modifies our conception of personality. When we emphasize initiative at the expense of interpretation we shall make most of the arbitrary element in miracle; when fellowship seems to us most important we shall lay chief stress on meaning.

This explains the change of attitude toward the miraculous to which we have already referred. It is not so much that we believe that the occurrence of arbitrary acts is impossible but that they would not be significant to us even if they did occur. To a generation trained in the school of exact science to value truth above everything, consistency has become the highest virtue for a moral being; and the greater a person is, the more consistent we should expect him to be. We do not overlook the transcendence of God or expect to banish mystery from his dealings with man. On the contrary, the more our knowledge grows, the more we are convinced of our littleness and limitation. But we believe that, in the measure that God reveals himself, the mystery is diminished and we are admitted into an understanding of his purpose.

It is clear then that if we are to retain the conception of miracle, we must extend it more widely than has been customary in Protestantism. We cannot be

content with the view that at certain rare intervals of time God intervenes in the world for man's salvation, while for the rest he has left man to himself. We must recover faith in the living God actively at work for the realization of moral ends. The division of territory which underlay the older treatment of the supernatural is no longer possible for us. We recognize the interests which explain it, but we feel that they must find their gratification in a different way. Our world is a universe—at least our *ideal* for the world is a universe—and all that it contains must somehow fall into place as parts of a single consistent system.

But because we recognize that miracle is a normal element in religious experience it does not follow that all miracles stand on the same level of importance. There are events which have purely individual significance, expressing some message of God to a particular person, meant for him alone. Others have social significance, affecting groups of individuals, larger or smaller: a family, a tribe, a church, or a nation. Still others have universal significance. They awake response not only in those to whom they first happen but in all the generations to whom their story comes, and not in one nation or religion only, but in all the world.⁸

So conceived, miracle loses the irrational character which has created so serious a difficulty for many

⁸ Among our contemporaries, the members of the First Century Christian Fellowship have done much to emphasize the possibility of immediate divine communication to the individual. They encourage their members to believe that in the most trivial matters they

of our contemporaries. It becomes a part, an indispensable part indeed, of that continuing process through which God is revealing his presence to man and fitting him for his worship and service.

It is true that we cannot demonstrate the reality of that presence to those who do not share our faith. It is always possible to argue that there is no place in the world for miracle, even in the personal sense in which religion affirms it, because there is nothing in experience which cannot in the last analysis be reduced to the terms of mathematical science. So far as strict logic is concerned, this is a possible hypothesis. The appearances which seem to suggest purpose, whether in man or in God, may be deceptive appearances. Even those experiences of choice on which man has based his consciousness of freedom

ought to expect definite leadings which will direct their activity; and no one who believes in a wise and loving heavenly Father or has studied the evidences of his self-manifestation in history would question that such guidance is possible.

It is well to remember, however, that the purpose of miracle is not to supersede the ordinary sources of our knowledge through reason and conscience. God, who has endowed us with intelligence and with free-will, will not do for us by miracle that which he has already made it possible for us to do for ourselves by reason. It is important, therefore, while thankfully recognizing the help which may come to us through sudden insight, to subject that insight to the test of repeated experiment and in the meantime to see in the more familiar resources which are open to us all the time gifts of God as authentic and as much to be trusted as the rarer leadings which, in our hour of deepest need, when all other help fails, may be vouchsafed to us.

From these experiences of primarily individual significance must be distinguished those exceptional events which have furnished the prophets and saints of the race with motives for their unique social mission. These, unlike our private miracles, have permanent, and in some cases universal, significance. What happened to Jesus at his baptism and his resurrection concerned not himself alone, or his immediate disciples, but all mankind.

may prove no exception to the universal law of necessity. Should this be our conclusion, the ethical interest which leads us to pick and choose, to prefer and to reject, to approve and to disapprove, in short, to make of the raw material with which life presents us the kind of world our conscience approves, will seem not the mark of strength but of weakness. The truly wise man will be the contemplative sage whose thought rises above the contingencies in which most men's lives are lived, to those unchanging principles which are equally valid in every possible world.

But for most of us such a solution of life's problems is profoundly unsatisfying. We cannot be content to be mere onlookers at the drama of the universe, nor do we believe we were meant to be. We are conscious of energies which impel us to activity and of ideals which set the goal to which our effort should be directed. We compare the past with the present and it seems to us that we have moved forward in the direction toward which we wish to go. And what we believe of ourselves we believe *a fortiori* of the unseen Actor who has fashioned star and sun and sea, whose footsteps we can trace in history, and whose voice we hear speaking in the silence of the soul. He, too, is working toward an end and he, too, comparing the present with the past, notes progress in the accomplishment of his plan. As we find in our own experience no inconsistency between law and freedom; as we, too, using materials given to us according to principles we cannot change, are yet able

to bring new things to pass, so it is with God. And the forward steps in his onward march, the stages in that creative evolution which is the law of the divine life are what religion knows as miracle.

CHAPTER XI

WHERE FAITH SEES GOD AT WORK IN HISTORY

1. The Permanent and the Changing in Man's Apprehension of God.
2. The Place of the Classic in Religion.
3. The Historic Religions as Man's Social Response to God's Self-Manifestation in History.
4. How Jesus Shows Us God at Work.

1. THE PERMANENT AND THE CHANGING IN MAN'S APPREHENSION OF GOD

Our study of the contemporary situation has made it clear that the problem of justifying faith in God involves not merely showing that there is a God, but choosing between different conceptions of God; and this is not an academic matter, as one might compare rival theories, giving one's assent to the one which proved most congenial, but as a choice between different ways of living, each making its claim not only upon the mind, but upon the affections and the will.

The necessity of this choice, more than any theoretical obstacle, makes faith difficult for many of our contemporaries. The forms which the religious life assumes are so many. The demands which its spokesmen make are apparently so conflicting, that it is easy to overlook the unity of the life of faith, and to think chiefly of its contrasts.

These contrasts have a double root—intellectual and moral. The intellectual root is the ever-changing view of the world which is the inevitable result of the progress of science, with its continual summons to a readjustment of perspective. The moral root is the weakness of the human will which, confronted with the choice between the narrower and the larger life, clings obstinately to the former.

We have repeatedly had occasion to consider both

of these disturbing factors. We have seen how, in addition to the inherent difficulties which must inevitably arise in any attempt to convey to a creature, limited and finite like man, truth concerning ultimate good or supreme wisdom, complications arise from the fact that the men who must surmount this difficulty stand at various elevations in their ascent of the hill of knowledge, yet must do their work and bear their witness with the insights which are within their field of vision. How easy then to identify some passing phase of man's apprehension of the Divine with God's final revelation, and to close one's eyes to the full disclosures which the opening of new vistas makes possible. Add to this the tendency, apparently inherent in man, to prefer the expression of one's momentary inclination, however limited and hampering, to that free surrender to the highest which is the heart of all great religion, and it is not difficult to understand why religion, instead of presenting us with simple and unmistakable issues, so often takes the form of a choice between rival possibilities.

Nor is this all; for beneath these limitations, intellectual or moral as the case may be, there appear to be deep-seated differences of disposition and of temperament, rooted in human nature itself, which no growth, either of knowledge or of grace, is likely ever to displace. There are persons to whom the response to divine grace seems easy and natural; in whom the sense of sin, which is inherent in human nature, takes the form rather of a constant reinterpretation of past inadequacies in the light of new

insights, than of any deliberate transgression of the divine command, so far as known; while there are others who, it would appear, must win their way to God through some fierce crisis of the soul in which the depths of evil are experimentally sounded. William James, in his distinction between the once-born and the twice-born soul, has reminded us of this deep-seated difference which meets us in all religions and in all the major forms of each great religion.

Nor can these contrasts be fully stated simply in terms of individual difference. They affect men's social relations. There are people who find their way to God most easily and most surely through the mediation of others. They shrink from personal responsibility. They submit willingly to social authority. The more severe the demand, the more definite the prescription, the greater the satisfaction they take in obedience. And there are others to whom such unqualified surrender seems treason to the highest. Before they yield, there is an inner court where the case must be tried, and an inward judge who must render his verdict. Only when conscience has spoken in response to an authority inherently meaningful and worthy, can they make the surrender that brings assurance and peace.¹

At whatever point we touch religion, therefore, we meet mankind's ancient problem of the permanent and the changing; but in religion it comes home with special poignancy because of the seriousness of the

¹ Cf. Brown, W. Adams, *Imperialistic Religion and the Religion of Democracy* (London, 1923), pp. 26-33.

issues which are at stake. The more keenly we feel our need of God, the more profoundly we have come to realize that, apart from his unchanging excellence, we can find no firm footing in this world of chance and change, the more we must desire to find some revelation of his presence—clear, enduring, unmistakable, which with final authority will give us the certainty we need.

2. THE PLACE OF THE CLASSIC IN RELIGION

In the face of contrasts so perplexing and so deep-seated, it is easy to conclude that there is no alternative for the individual but either blind submission to some external authority, or the attempt by the unaided reason to reach a solution of problems on which the most learned intellects of the race have been at work for millenniums without reaching agreement.

Fortunately this is not the whole story. There is another factor of which we have to take account, which helps us to bring order out of the apparent chaos; a form of social mediation which, in a strange yet significant way, helps us to reconcile the conflicting claims of authority and freedom. This reconciling possibility we have now to explore.

Our study of miracle has already given us a clue. There we saw that not all miracles stand on the same level of importance. Some have significance primarily for the individual, others date epochs in the life of the tribe or of the nation, while still others have universal significance.

The distinction between the significance of particular miracles was not at first apparent. It emerged in the course of history through the survival of the fittest. If Jesus, as Christians believe, is to maintain his place as the miracle *par excellence*, of significance for all mankind, it will be because he is shown to be such by the compelling evidence of fact. Only as, facing the pathos and the mystery of life, we see that successive generations find in Jesus the satisfaction of their deepest needs and win from him the inspiration for their finest achievements, can we justify our faith that what he has meant to his disciples of earlier generations he will, in the end, come to mean to humanity as a whole.²

We have an analogy in the secular sphere in the familiar literary phenomenon we call a classic. A classic is an individual creation which has acquired

² The distinction between the permanent and the transient in miracle is obscured by the view which puts all the miracles of the Bible on the same level and regards their function as exhausted in authenticating the book in which they are recorded. But such a conception fails to do justice to their full significance. The miracles recorded in the Bible are not simply witnesses to God's revelation. They are themselves an integral part of it. That revelation comes to us out of a distant past and is couched, much of it, in forms of thought that we today have outgrown. If the miracles of the Bible are to retain their significance for modern men, we must distinguish between what belonged to their time and what belongs to all time; between what was meant for the men to whom they first happened and what is meant for all mankind.

When we approach the miracles of the Bible, therefore, there are several preliminary questions that we must ask in order to put them in their proper setting.

There is, in the first place, a literary question. Was the story meant to be taken literally; or have we, as in the case of the Book of Jonah or the story of the serpent in Paradise, an eternal truth in the form of a parable?

There is, in the next place, a scientific question. Is the event re-

permanent significance. It is a work of art which approves itself as excellent by its capacity to excite admiration and to call forth response from generation to generation. And this not simply because people agree to take it as a standard, teach it in schools, and exhibit it in museums; but because sincere spirits, simple as well as learned, find in it the revelation of truths which appear to them ultimate and, contemplating its excellence, feel themselves in touch with enduring reality.

It is not only in the world of art in the narrower sense—in literature, in poetry, and in the plastic arts—that we meet the classic. We find it also in symbolic acts which, by their repetition, gain permanent spiritual significance—such acts as the presentation

corded a miracle in the scientific sense, or can science tell us things about its antecedents and parallels which were not known, or at least not known in the same way, to the men who first recorded it? Many of the events in the Biblical story once considered miracles in the scientific sense (*e.g.*, the miracles of healing or the casting out of demons) we now see to be examples of a class of events which science no longer regards as miraculous. Yet to religious faith they are no less evidences of God's presence and power.

Again there is the distinction between miracles of individual and of social importance. Paul makes this distinction when he discriminates between those mystic experiences vouchsafed to him in his private capacity when he was caught up to heaven and saw things unspeakable and the vision on the Damascus road by which he was set apart for his apostolic mission.

Finally, there is the distinction between those miracles which concern particular groups of individuals and those which have universal reference. For Israel the deliverance from Egypt and the destruction of Pharaoh's Army at the Red Sea remain God's greatest miracles since it is by these that Israel was established as a nation and set apart for its unique historic mission. But Christian faith recognizes a greater miracle still—that which was consummated when in the person of Jesus the Eternal Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

of the ring in marriage. We call such significant social acts sacraments, since they are material signs of inward spiritual meaning. They speak as unmistakably, if less explicitly, to something in man which he recognizes as inherently worthy and to which he responds with consecration and loyalty. The ritual of religion has such sacramental character. It is a language through which successive generations find in the repetition of familiar acts, the disclosure of ever-new and significant meanings.

What is true of the language of word and of act is true pre-eminently of the persons by whom that language is spoken and to whom it is addressed. Here again we find our familiar distinction between the transient and the permanent. There are persons whose significance seems exhausted in what they do and say to their own generation and to their own circle. There are others whose character outlasts the deeds they do and the words they say, and becomes the permanent possession of mankind. We call such exceptional spirits geniuses. They are the classics of personality; individuals who outlast time and change because in them something eternal has made its home.

God uses all these forms in his self-communication to men. He speaks to men through the great religious personalities who have had the most vivid sense of the supernatural as present and who, as the founders and prophets of the great religions, have been the media of God's revelation to their fellow-men. He speaks to men through the writings which

record the insights which these teachers have brought and, as the continuing source of new revelations in the present, have become the Bibles of the race. He speaks to men through the institutions which have grown up as a result of these revelations and which, through solemn ritual and sacred song, mediate the life to which they invite. Most directly and persuasively he speaks to men through the lives of men and women who, in response to this revelation and as members of these institutions, have responded to the invitation thus given and are living the life of faith.

3. THE HISTORIC RELIGIONS AS MAN'S SOCIAL RESPONSE TO GOD'S SELF-MANIFESTATION IN HISTORY

These different forms are not isolated phenomena any more than the new beginnings which we find in nature are isolated phenomena, but parts of a continuing activity through which the divine makes its presence known. Within this ongoing process we find particular groupings which register man's reaction to the divine revelation over a definite historic period and express some distinctive interpretation of its nature and its significance. We call these groupings the historic religions. In them the experiences of individual men with God find social confirmation and stimulus, and the insights of the past are perpetuated for the instruction of future generations. They sum up in convenient and accessible form the story of

God's self-revelation to our predecessors. They provide us with definite objects through which God's continuing presence in this world is made manifest. They furnish the landmarks which point the way along the road we have still to travel.

In the historic religions the contrasted views of the supernatural to which we have already referred find intellectual expression in differing theologies. In mystic religions, like Hinduism and Buddhism, the contrast between nature and the supernatural is primarily an æsthetic contrast. It is the contrast between the transient and the abiding, and salvation comes through insight which leads to detachment. In ethical religions, like Judaism and Christianity, the contrast is primarily a moral contrast. It is the contrast between the righteous and the sinful, and salvation takes place through repentance and renewal. But the contrast is never an absolute one. In every great religion both ethical and mystical elements are found and each of the possible views of the supernatural finds expression at some time or other. The paradox which we have already noted in our study of the life of faith in ourselves reappears in the conception of divine being in which that life finds its source. God is thought of now as like man, and now as unlike; now as immanent, now as transcendent; as Creator, ever bringing the new to pass in nature and in man; yet as perfect, realizing in himself already that after which we aspire.

Earlier than the historic religions, but living on beside and within them, we find a group of simpler

and more primitive concepts and practices which to our later view seem superstitious and often immoral. As we have already said, there is scarcely an object known to man, however revolting or ugly, which has not at some time been worshipped by somebody; and there is scarcely a scientific theory, however inadequate or grotesque, to which by some religion supernatural sanction has not been attached. The difficulty is not that when science and ethics were still in their crude and superstitious stages religion was limited by the concepts and practices they furnished, but that when critical intelligence had begun to discern their limitations and replace them with better concepts, theologians, in their desire to preserve the permanent values of religion, have too often remained content with the ideas and practices of an earlier stage. This uncritical conservatism is largely responsible for the widespread rejection of the supernatural in our day in spite of the many and manifest evidences of its presence.

We shall not be surprised then to find, as we do, that many of our contemporaries have broken with formal religion and are turning for the satisfaction of their deepest needs to ways of life that are frankly secular. It is not only in the religious field in the narrower sense that God makes his presence felt, but in the progress of history as a whole. Many of the social movements of our time which on the face of them seem most outspoken in their attack upon conventional religion may, when seen in a wider perspective, prove to be God's way of recovering for mankind as-

pects of truth which those who claim to speak in his name had overlooked or denied.³

In Christianity, as in the other historic religions, we find a combination of the permanent and the transient. The revelation of the divine which comes to us through Jesus and the great personalities whom he has inspired and transformed is associated with more primitive and superstitious elements which are the survival from earlier generations. Within Christianity we find theologians differing in their attitude to this revelation, some giving it a mystic interpretation, other emphasizing its ethical features. In Christianity, moreover, we find that the truth taught is often obscured by the imperfection of the teachers. In Christianity, in a word, as in all other religions, we find the treasure which God has provided for our enrichment given to us in earthen vessels.

Science with its painstaking criticism has opened our eyes to this combination of the transient with the permanent in Christianity. In an earlier day when knowledge of other religions was limited, it was easy to think of Christianity as God's sole, or at least as his only trustworthy, revelation and to dismiss all the other religions as blind gropings of the human spirit. But a better acquaintance with these other religions has shown us that they, too, have had their prophets and saints to whom God's presence was revealed and

³ It is a commonplace in our day to speak of Communism as a religion, and no one who has studied the wrongs against which it is a protest, or the motives to which it makes appeal, can question that through this great upheaval of our time God is pointing his Church to its own failures and summoning its members to renewed consecration.

in whom the supernatural life was really, even if partially, manifested.

Shall we then conclude that the different religions, like the different miracles within each religion, all stand on the same level? Should each nation, like each age, be left to find its way to God in the fashion it finds most natural? Gandhi was recently reported to have protested against the effrontery of Christian missionaries who seek to impose Western ways upon the religious life of the East, and there are many, even in Christian circles, who feel that the protest is justified.

Yet Gandhi is himself a witness to the legitimacy of Christian missions. As a Hindu, he tells us, God spoke to him through the *Gita*.⁴ But he would not be the man he is if to the revelation which came to him through the *Gita* that other revelation God has made of himself in the Bible had not been added. In the hymn book which he uses in his morning hour of worship in his Ashram at Ahmedabad we find, with songs from the Hindu Scriptures, such Christian hymns as "In the Cross of Christ I Glory." And he himself has told us in his autobiography that the first suggestion of the principle of passive resistance came to him from the reading of the Gospels.

It is not then by suppressing the distinctive values in the other religions that we best serve mankind; rather by emphasizing to the fullest degree the truth that is given to us through our own. Each of the

⁴ Andrews, C. F., *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas* (New York, 1930), p. 78.

greater religions—Buddhism, Mohammedanism, even Judaism in its great days—has presented itself to men as the universal religion, not in the sense of containing in its present form all that God had to say to mankind, but as possessing a central message which all men need. Christianity can claim no less. It is by its very nature a missionary religion, committed by its founder to share its life-giving gospel with all mankind. For Jesus, according to the faith of Christians, fulfills the hopes of the other religions by bringing to them the most satisfying answers ever given to the deepest questions which disturb the hearts of men: What is God like? How does God feel toward me? What does God want me to do and to be?

Only the sharing must be done in the right way, by life rather than by word, and in the spirit of humility rather than of domination. Commenting on Gandhi's reported criticism of Christian missions, Lord Irwin thus expresses the true spirit which should animate the missionary when he goes to men of another race and faith: "It would require very strong proof to convince me that he who is one of the greatest social reformers India has known had failed to recognize that the real work of Christian missions is poles apart from proselytizing as commonly understood. I am sure that he knows, as we do, that it springs only from the irresistible impulse of men who, knowing themselves to possess the treasure beyond price, long to share it with their fellows and are impelled by the value they attach to each human soul to spend themselves in lifting those who are down, ministering to

the oppressed, and bringing self-respect to those who have lost, or never before known, its meaning.”⁵

Let the Christian missionary go in this spirit and he should find a welcome from all men of goodwill.

4. HOW JESUS SHOWS US GOD AT WORK

To Christians the miracle of miracles is Jesus. In him his disciples see God’s supreme and final revelation to our race. To Jesus therefore we must look for our clearest disclosure of the nature of the new world to which all the lesser miracles point.

Jesus is no isolated historical phenomenon. He made indeed a new beginning, but he built on what others had done before him and he left it to others to complete his work. The life and love which were his in such abundance were his in order that they might be given away. “When the fullness of time was come,” says St. Paul, “God sent forth his son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons.”⁶

In Jesus as in miracle everywhere we find a combination of mystery and meaning. We have seen that he brings the answer to life’s most haunting questions, but he brings these answers not in word alone but in deed and in life. In him we see God at work, incarnating in a human personality those qualities which appeal to us as most divine. In Jesus the graces after which we aspire—beauty, righteousness, love—appear not as isolated virtues, but as aspects of a con-

⁵ From an address to the Mission Boards in England published in the *Glasgow Herald*, July 22, 1931.

⁶ Gal. 4:4, 5.

sistent character—more than this, as vitalizing principles, bringing to those who touch him freedom, hope and joy. So wise was he that he could impart to a group of Galilean fishermen insights which made them the spiritual teachers of succeeding generations. He had such sympathy that simple folk heard him gladly, and to many that were sick his very touch brought healing. So pure was he that men who were much in his company became conscious of their sins. So astonishing was his vitality that it seemed natural to his friends that death could not hold him, and that he brought life and immortality to light.

And this life-giving quality has been a continuing characteristic. In a ministry of three short years, Jesus spoke words and did deeds which live for us to-day as if they had been spoken and performed yesterday. When we read his life we fall under a spell. It is as if a window had been opened and light had streamed in. The words he spoke to his disciples in Galilee have a meaning for *us*. The death he died on the hill beyond Jerusalem is of concern to *us*. We long to be like him in his beauty and in his goodness, and we dare to believe that the love which he reveals still enfolds and upholds us.

It is not Christians only who feel this mysterious attraction in Jesus. Men who live in the spirit in all parts of the world are at home in his companionship. Some even who no longer feel sure of God recognize in Jesus something more than human, and following an older example,⁷ are ready, like Middleton Murry,⁸

⁷ John 1:14.

⁸ *The Life of Jesus* (London, 1926), p. 12.

to recognize in him "the ineffable Word made flesh."

So, meeting Jesus, we are aware of the miracle which is the mark of the supernatural everywhere—the miracle of creation. Who is this Galilean carpenter, whose words have eternal life? We turn to the scholars for an answer, only to find the mystery deepening. There is much about the human life of Jesus which they can tell us, much that we cannot afford to neglect. But when we have learned all that they have to teach, our question still remains unanswered. For the Jesus they show us is man as we are men; a historic figure, interesting, attractive, fascinating; but when all is said, only one more factor in the chain of causes and effects that science studies without being able to tell us whence they came and what they mean. To science, Jesus, like all the lesser miracles, remains a mystery that can be explained only as it is explained away.

Faith has its own explanation; the explanation that it gives to all the miracles as it sees them growing luminous with meaning. To the man of faith, Jesus is God's Word to man spoken through man. He is God's way made manifest; God's truth imparting itself; God's life evoking answering vitality in man. In Jesus faith recognizes God at work—incarnate for our salvation.

It is not strange that Christians, having such experience of Jesus, and convinced, as through the centuries they have been convinced, that in his person they have God's final revelation to man, should have grown impatient of the slow process of witness

through which alone Christian missions win converts and should have sought some short-cut to the demonstration of their Master's supremacy. So when men have asked for the grounds of their confidence, they have pointed to inerrant Bible or infallible Church, and have been unwilling to await the slower, but more convincing evidence of an expanding Christian experience. Bible and Church have their place among the evidences of Christianity, a place majestic and indispensable; but that place is there because they point men to Jesus that they may test his message for themselves. They are witnesses, telling us what others have found. They are invitations bidding us test Christ for ourselves. Not till what others have told us about Jesus is confirmed by what we have ourselves experienced of his power to enlighten, to inspire, and to renew, will our faith in his worldwide supremacy be securely grounded.

This is only to say over again in other words and in another context, what we saw so clearly in our study of miracle. Unique as it is, there is a deep sense in which no miracle can stand alone. And the greater the miracle, the truer this must be. Jesus is the central figure in the world's history his disciples believe him to be, because to each man to whom he comes, he means something different; to each he shows something new. No other man has seen him in quite the same way. To each he is the word that God is speaking to that man only among all the sons of men.

PART IV
SAINTHOOD

CHAPTER XII

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

1. Retrospect.
2. Prospect.

1. RETROSPECT

We have traversed a wide field and raised questions of far-reaching importance. Let us sum up the conclusions to which we seem to have been led.

First of all this: that in our contact with the supernatural we are dealing with something objectively real; a reality only partially known, to be sure, as all our knowledge of reality is partial, yet none the less known as real; more than this, as the most significant of all realities.

Secondly, that this reality is everywhere present. Nature and the supernatural are not two independent realms, geographically separated, but two aspects of the one universe of God: two ways in which God makes his presence known.

Yet though the supernatural is everywhere present, it is not everywhere and always equally *manifest*. God makes his presence evident, first of all, through exceptional events and experiences which arrest attention and excite wonder. These events and experiences—by faith interpreted as miracles—are found in all religions and have their psychological parallels in secular life. To science a cause of perplexity, because of their exceptional character, they become significant for religion by their enlightening quality. They are not simply wonders but signs.

The purpose of these signs is to point us to continuing realities in our own lives, in the lives of others,

in nature and in God. They are the harbingers of a new world, the world for which we were meant and in which some day we shall live; the world that is even now all about us and of which we may have foretastes in the life of today.

Though the supernatural is thus in the highest degree natural, it is not on that account uniform. On the contrary, it differs from nature just in this, that it manifests itself in infinite variety. Nature is the sphere of the calculable; the supernatural of the novel, the creative. Through the supernatural God reveals himself in the individual and to the individual.

The fact that God makes his presence known in all religions does not mean that he makes his presence known in all to the same degree or in the same way. In the life of the individual as in that of the race, progress is possible only as those to whom God's fuller revelation has come share their larger insight. There is therefore nothing out of keeping with what we know of God's method of revealing himself in the Christian conviction that through Jesus, God has given man his supreme revelation. Then only would this conviction prove illegitimate if any generation of Christians were to identify its partial understanding of God's revelation with the whole and were to close their eyes to the new and higher truth he has still to impart.

Yet though all our knowledge of God is partial, we are not left in uncertainty. As we retrace God's revelation through the centuries we perceive perma-

ment factors which outlast the changes of the years. Whether in the first Christian century or in the twentieth or in the earlier centuries that precede the coming of the Christ, God reveals himself as beauty, as righteousness, and as love; and the proof that he is indeed beautiful, righteous, and loving, is that in the measure that men fix their thoughts upon him and yield their wills to his obedience, their own attitude is transformed and their lives become unified, purposeful, effective, and happy.

Thus there can be no purely theoretical approach to the knowledge of God. Only one path is open to us: namely, the surrender of the will to the highest we know. We learn what righteousness means by doing justice; what beauty means by cultivating harmony of spirit; what love means by loving. When through the practice of love in the limited field which is open to us in our personal lives, we have come to understand in some measure what it means to love as God would have us love, we begin to discern the marks of love in the universe about us.

To sum up: the older way of expressing the relation between nature and the supernatural was at fault because it began at the wrong end. It would have us proceed from nature to the supernatural, whereas the true order is just the reverse. All living religion begins with the supernatural. Nature is a late discovery; indeed in the comprehensive sense in which science uses the term, the latest discovery of all. It was after man had learned to recognize God's handiwork in the particular sacraments religion pro-

vides, that he rose to the conception that, in the last analysis, all nature is sacramental.

2. PROSPECT

We are brought back to the insight with which we began. The insight is this: that in order to win a firm basis for our conviction that God exists, he must reveal himself in action, and that action must take place in us. Thought alone cannot give us the assurance we need. The supernatural, which is without and above us, must enter our lives, and make its home within.

This does not mean that thought has no contribution to make to our discovery of God. It has of course a very real contribution to make. Thought can clear away obstacles which have divided our interest and diverted our attention. Thought can help us to distinguish between lasting realities and changing definitions. Thought can show us that there is nothing in what we know of nature which makes it impossible that God should exist, and can point to many reasons which go far to change this possibility into a probability. But thought alone cannot do more than this. It can beckon, but it cannot constrain. It can point the way, but the will must respond. We pass from probability to certainty by the acts of faith through which we make contact with God in immediate personal experience.

That is why miracle must always hold the decisive place among the evidences for the living God, for miracle, like all first-hand contact with reality, car-

ries within itself its own evidence. In miracle we not only see God at work, we are ourselves acted upon by him. We may, indeed we must, test the accuracy of our understanding of God's activity by comparing it with all that we know of God from other sources. But such verification follows the experience of illumination—it cannot produce it. There is only one way to become sure of God and that is to meet him face to face, in his mystery, in his beauty, in his righteousness, in his love. God is not an alien power, entering nature from without, but a constant presence, ever waiting to make his meaning known. If God were not present in nature, speaking to us through its symbols, nature would have no secrets to disclose, no spiritual uses to serve. We should be orphans in a mindless world.

It might seem indeed as if this insight carried us only a little way. Since our assurance of God's presence depends upon an immediate intuition which carries with it its own evidence, are we not condemned to inactivity until that intuition comes?

If this be true, it is not true in religion only. At whatever point we probe our most valued experiences we find that they become our own in proportion as we have had least to do with producing them. All the greatest things in life come to us as gifts. Whether in art, in science, or in our familiar intercourse with one another, our part is to recognize the gift and to accept it gratefully. All the poets have known that love is given. Artists talk of creation when what they really mean is illumination. The greater the artist,

the more certain he will be that what he depicts by chisel or brush has been shown to him. Science too has its periods of watchful waiting for the insight which will suggest the next experiment. When the light breaks it is hard to say whether satisfaction or surprise has the upper hand.

In the world of affairs the greatest leaders are the most conscious of being led. One would not look for Bismarck among the mystics; yet once when asked to explain the secret of a statesman's power, he is said to have answered: "It is little enough that the statesman can do. For the most part he is dependent upon the march of events. He must listen till he hears God's tread in the pathway of history and, catching the hem of his garment, follow as best he can."

But we do not draw from these familiar experiences the conclusion that we have no part to play. Because the great insights which transfigure life come to us out of the blue, it does not follow that we can do nothing to fit ourselves to receive them or to use them when they come. On the contrary, it is this very possibility which gives its significance to the routine which fills so much of our life. All true education is preparation. It is thrilling expectation of an insight still to come. It is discipline of mind that prepares the spirit for its great hour. It is the bride adorning herself for the bridegroom.

The lives of men of science are for the most part lives of routine. They are doing day by day things which in themselves seem insignificant, which indeed,

were they not seen in the larger context of some universal law, would be of an intolerable monotony. Compared with the life of many a modern scientist, the experience of St. Teresa was one of constant variety. I know a brilliant young scholar who has spent four of the best years of his life as nurse to three young chimpanzees; but all the time, heartening and sustaining him, there was the possibility of some discovery that would be of benefit to mankind.

Why should it be otherwise in religion? If God is a fact, he will make his presence known in due time. But while we wait we can be getting ready, and a most effective part of our preparation is to be much in the company of those to whom the vision has already come—the prophets who have been God's spokesmen through the ages, and the saints who have translated the prophets' insights into life.

CHAPTER XIII

IDEALS OF SAINTHOOD

1. Sainthood as the Goal of the Life of Faith.
2. Contrasted Ideals of Sainthood.
3. The Place of the Saint in Catholic Piety.
4. How Protestants Conceive the Saintly Life.
5. Secular Substitutes for the Saint.
6. Why the Sainthood of the Few Is Not Enough.

1. SAINTHOOD AS THE GOAL OF THE LIFE OF FAITH

Among the deathless sentences which Jesus sent ringing down the centuries is one which in its demands upon the capacity of man seems to set a standard which surpasses the human. "Be ye perfect," he is reported once to have said to his disciples, "even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."¹

Yet, in every age, there have been men and women who have taken this word of Jesus seriously and have made perfection their goal. We call these heroic spirits saints. In them we see to what heights God's grace may lift the man who puts himself unreservedly at God's disposal. In them too man's differing ideals of perfection meet us in sharpest contrast.

For many generations the deepest admiration of Christian believers went out to the martyr, the great example of self-sacrifice. In him they saw the typical saint, since like his Master he had sealed his faith by his death. The first communion services of the Christians were celebrated over the tombs which enclosed the loved forms of those who had died for the faith. The light that lighted the sombre avenues of the Catacombs came from the little lamps which marked these sacred resting places. When the church issued from the Catacombs into the region of the upper air, pagan temples were converted into Chris-

¹ Matt. 5:48.

tian shrines and under every altar reposed a relic of what had once been a martyred saint. The great basilica of St. Peter rose over the remains of the Apostle and altars and churches marked the spots associated with the imprisonment and martyrdom of St. Paul.

The tradition of sainthood as sacrificial love has been a continuing tradition. The Roman Catholic Church still discovers saints among present-day followers of Jesus. The life story of the young Carmelite nun, St. Thérèse of the Infant Jesus, is sold by the hundred thousand and many intelligent Catholics believe that they have received proofs of her intervention and favor.

But among Protestants, as we have already seen, the word saint has fallen on evil days. An unnatural type of piety has long been associated with the name and it is easy to overlook the fact that the true saint is simply the man or the woman who is devoted, without reservation, to attaining as nearly as possible here below the standard set by Jesus. Those in the Catholic Church who aspire after sainthood renounce the attractions which the world offers to the mind or to the will, part with their earthly possessions, adopt a habit and a rule of life, enter the priesthood or some religious order and are visibly separated from the ordinary world. Because in Protestantism there are no such separating marks we are apt to forget that in Protestantism no less than in Catholicism sainthood is the goal and all men are called to its attainment. The saints of Protestantism

form no officially designated order, distinguished from their less advanced fellow-Christians by the imprimatur of the church, but none the less they are recognized as saints by the help they give and the devotion they inspire.

To understand how the Catholic ideal of sainthood arose we must go back many centuries. When through the decree of Constantine, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire large numbers of persons entered the church for purely conventional reasons of fashion or convenience. The contrast between the church and the world so evident in the days of persecution, was now obscured and the profession of Christianity became to a degree greater perhaps than at any time before or since, a matter of good form. Profoundly religious spirits began to be dissatisfied with the church and fled to the desert far from the life of men, in order to secure the opportunity for the cultivation of the supernatural life by means of solitary prayer. As time went on and the claims of man's social nature began to be felt, some of these solitary worshippers came together for the common practice of the religious life and what we know as monasticism was born.

In the monastic orders, as these churches within the church were called, there was worked out a series of rules to be observed, a discipline having for its object the complete mastery of sin. The love of money was to be conquered by the vow of poverty, the appeal of sex by the vow of celibacy, the desire

for self-expression by the vow of obedience. In the course of time the church recognized and approved these new communities and confirmed their rules and they came more and more to set the standard for the cultivation of the religious life everywhere.

So there grew up within the church two types of the religious life, both supernatural, but one more earnest and arduous than the other. The name "religious" came to be used in a technical sense of the man or the woman who had chosen the second rather than the first. Those whose devotion to the monastic life was most complete were venerated above their fellows and came in time to be officially designated as "saints." They were held up as models for imitation and it was believed that by their lives of self-abnegation and sacrifice they won for their fellow-Christians who were living in the world benefits which were obtainable in no other way.

Protestants regard the Catholic exaltation of the saint as mistaken, but they too are compelled to recognize the contrast to which it calls attention. Among their own number there are many who take their religion easily and, like the less earnest Catholics, will do as little in the way of religious service as they can; while there are others who make religion their controlling interest and are ready for any sacrifice which loyalty to Christ demands. It will help us to understand wherein the Protestant ideal of sainthood agrees with that of the Catholics, as well as the points at which it differs, if we take our departure from a familiar fact.

2. CONTRASTED IDEALS OF SAINTHOOD

The fact from which we take our departure is that while it is God's will that all should be saints, not all attain sainthood in the same way. There are some individuals, as we have seen, in all churches, who have received from God gifts of insight and of utterance which make them in a true sense mediators between God and their fellows. Through the completeness of their devotion to the highest they know, they help others to realize the presence of God.

The difference between the Protestant and the Catholic ideals of sainthood appears partly in the view which is taken of the means by which such exceptional excellence is cultivated, partly in the test by which it is recognized.²

² The difference between the Catholic and the Protestant views of the Christian life has its theological expression in the view taken of justification. To the Catholic, justification or the acceptance of the sinner as righteous by God, depends upon sanctification, or the extent to which he has realized the life of holiness; and the saint is the person in whom the process is complete. To the Protestant justification is by faith alone, and once for all. The saint is one who, being justified by faith, has entered upon the life which has complete holiness for its goal. To understand the point at issue we must remember that while both parties to the controversy use the same words, they use them with different meanings. When the Protestant asserts that sainthood, so far as possible at all, is equally the prerogative of all Christians, he is describing a *type* of life which he believes it is God's will that we should all live, and which it is possible for all of us to attain to some degree. When the Catholic insists that it is not given to all to become saints he is thinking of the *degree* of perfection which is actually attained. When perfection is conceived in its most comprehensive sense as the complete fulfilment of God's will for man, Catholics as well as Protestants agree that for the great mass of mankind, the full consummation lies in the future. Not here, where all is relative and imperfect, but

Thus Catholics believe that perfection, at least in the sense of a complete mastery of sin, can be attained in this life. They point to certain persons in whom this conquest has in fact taken place. But the Protestant belief is that only when we see Christ face to face in another world shall we be wholly conformed to his image.

Catholics regard such sainthood as the prerogative of a few and believe that these few attain it through

in that deathless life which lies beyond the grave, is full perfection to be attained.

It is not easy to accept this postponement; it never has been easy. So from time to time men have appeared who have promised some earlier and easier consummation. Sometimes that promise has had reference to the individual alone, and again, to society as a whole. If it is God's will that all should be saints, we are told, then sainthood must be easier than the laborious thing which the historic saints have conceived it to be. What God asks of us is surely not beyond our powers. So in Protestantism, in spite of its denial that perfection is possible in this life, perfectionist doctrines have, from time to time, appeared which have promised a life of complete and immediate victory over sin to all who would follow the proposed panacea.

The social parallel of the doctrine of individual perfection is the apocalyptic hope. Even within the New Testament we find the Disciples expecting the speedy return of Jesus, to establish his Kingdom upon earth, and though this hope was for the time abandoned, and a substitute found in the experience of mystic ecstasy or the promise of sacramental grace, it was certain to be revived in some new form, when the bitterness of present failure proved more than heart could bear. Even today there are millions of simple but sincere Christians who expect that Christ will come in physical presence within their own generation.

Secularism, too, has its apocalyptic hope. Many have been the Utopias designed by man as short cuts to social perfection. Communism, the latest of them all, as it is being preached by its Soviet missionaries with all the fervor of the first Christian Evangelists, is but the translation, into the language of modern economics, of the primitive expectation of the speedy coming of the Kingdom of God on earth. Only in this case it is man who is to be his own Messiah and science the weapon by which he is to subdue his adversaries and realize the perfection of which he dreams.

superhuman effort and renunciation. Protestants are committed to the more daring doctrine that all Christians are called to be saints. They believe that in conversion the resources which a man possesses for his struggle against sin are augmented and that he is enabled by God's grace to approximate in varying degree the perfect life to which all are called.

Catholics believe that in the Providence of God and with his assistance those who have been called to the life of sainthood may acquire, by their sacrifices, a surplus of merit which becomes efficacious for others; whereas Protestants are convinced that since Christ has made an atonement sufficient for all, there remains no place for the acquisition of further merit by the saints.

Catholics finally put upon the church the responsibility of determining by official action who are saints and they confine their veneration to these Christians alone, whereas Protestants believe that God only knows who among his children are living lives well pleasing to him.²

3. THE PLACE OF THE SAINT IN CATHOLIC PIETY

But the contrast between the Catholic and the Protestant views of sainthood goes deeper than a difference as to the time when sainthood is realized or even as to the relation between the saint and his less favored fellow-Christians. It points to a contrast in the religious ideal itself—a contrast which antedates Christianity and has its roots in different ideas

² See footnote 2, pp. 237-238.

about the service which is most pleasing to God. It is the contrast between the contemplative and the active life. The Catholic saint is most often a mystic—and mysticism tends always to draw attention away from the affairs of this passing world toward the eternal verities of the world which is unseen. The excellence in which the mystic takes supreme delight is beauty—a beauty that transcends all the lesser beauties which are open to us by sense perception. The Protestant saint, on the other hand, is a man of action, and action in the world of affairs. The task set him by God, as he conceives it, is to do God's will in the station to which he has been called. Righteousness is the quality in God of which he is most vividly conscious—a righteousness which finds its clearest expression in God's dealing with moral evil, in the individual and in society.³

The primacy given by the Catholic to the contemplative life explains many things about the saints which repel the average Protestant. It gives a reason for their ascetic practices. These are not valued for themselves but because they help to free the will from its engrossing preoccupations and enable it to

³ It is of course true that this contrast is not absolute. Both contemplation and activity have their place in the religious life, and Catholics and Protestants alike recognize this. The saints recognized by the Catholic Church have not all been religious in the technical sense, but include heroic spirits like Joan of Arc, who led armies to battle. Nevertheless it is true that contemplation has been given a more central place in Catholic than in Protestant piety, and the activity which is regarded by Catholics as most pleasing to God is that which is designed to increase the opportunities for the contemplative life and to make the time spent in prayer more effective. Protestants on the other hand have emphasized the religious significance of callings which in Catholic eyes are secular.

concentrate its attention upon the divine mystery. Money, sex, the right to go one's own way and to live one's own life, whatever might conceivably divert the will from its supreme task, all must be given up. But the great saints have not been content with the surrender of these lesser goods. They have aspired to be rid of selfhood altogether and to become one with God in an ineffable experience, in which not thought or desire merely but consciousness itself disappears.

This desire for complete self-abnegation explains too the concentration of attention upon the Cross which is so familiar a feature of Catholic piety. It explains the voluntary acceptance of self-inflicted suffering, often the passionate desire for it. Of all human experiences suffering is the most repugnant to man's natural disposition. Hence it is most useful in bringing about that complete reversal of standards which it is the aim of the ascetic discipline to produce.

Recently there came into my hands the life of the Viscount de Foucauld, a French nobleman who, after entering the army as a *Chasseur d'Afrique*, conducting solitary explorations in Morocco, and writing a brilliant book on his geographical observations, came under the influence of Abbé Houdin⁴ and was by him converted. He became a Trappist monk, but finding even that austere rule too conventional to satisfy his ideal of the religious life, he received a dispensation

⁴ A French priest of whom Baron von Hügel speaks in his letters as a religious director of singular wisdom and beauty of character.

from his vows and, after some months in Palestine, took up the life of a hermit in the Desert of Sahara. Here as a missionary to the desert tribes he carried life to the extreme of austerity till his superiors feared for his sanity, if not for his life. Murdered by members of a fanatical group, he was buried among the Tuaregs, and his tomb has become a shrine for the population of a vast region.

While he was still in Jerusalem, he wrote to a friend:

"God has let me find here, to the fullest extent, what I wanted: poverty, solitude, abjection, very humble work, complete obscurity, as perfect an imitation as possible of the life of our Lord Jesus in this same Nazareth."⁵

The story is typical of much that meets us in the annals of the saints. Contemplating these examples of self-sought and self-inflicted suffering it is easy for the Protestant to forget that the saints did not think of themselves as suffering only or even primarily for their own advancement in holiness. They had, as they believed, a social mission to perform by their prayers and were never more conscious that they were serving their fellows than when they were most alone. Through their detachment from the visible world they were setting an example which made it easier for those who were living their lives in a secular atmosphere to believe in the existence of the unseen world. In the quiet hours dedicated to prayer

⁵ Bazin, R., *Charles de Foucauld: Hermit and Explorer* (Trans. by P. Keelan; London, 1923), p. 110.

they were able by their intercession to draw souls to God.⁶

Thus though detached from the concerns of this world the saints, even in their most solitary moments, were not alone, for they were conscious of belonging to a society which afforded the most satisfying of companionships—even the Communion of Saints.

In her book, *Shadows on the Rock*, Willa Cather has pictured for us the effects of this consciousness upon people facing hardships under unfamiliar conditions. Writing of the life of the early Canadian sisterhoods, she says:

“The cheerful faces were those in the convents. The Ursulines and the Hospitalières, indeed, were scarcely exiles. When they came across the Atlantic, they brought their family with them, their kindred, their closest friends. In whatever little wooden vessel they had labored across the sea, they carried all; they brought to Canada the Holy Family, the saints and martyrs, the glorious company of the Apostles, the heavenly host. . . .

“So the nuns, those who were cloistered and those who came and went about the town, were always cheerful, never lugubrious. Their voices, even when they spoke to one through the veiled grille, were pleasant and inspiring to hear. . . . They conversed blithely, elegantly. When, on parting from a stranger, a Sister said pleasantly: ‘I hope

⁶ One of the duties of the Carmelite nuns is to pray for a higher order of spirituality in the priesthood. We can understand therefore why a Catholic missionary Bishop should desire the presence of a sisterhood of enclosed nuns in his field of service, since it is his firm conviction that his work may be made more efficacious for the saving of souls by their intercession.

When a friendly critic protested to a young missionary priest that it seemed wrong to allow the young St. Thérèse almost to die of cold in her chilly convent in the North of France he replied: “You forget that that was how she chose to suffer for us.”

we shall meet in heaven,' that meant nothing doleful,—it meant a happy appointment, for tomorrow, perhaps!"⁷

4. HOW PROTESTANTS CONCEIVE THE SAINTLY LIFE

As Catholics emphasize the contemplative, so Protestants the active life. They see God at work in the world of men and feel called to follow Christ in his human ministry of love. This ministry should not require of man to leave the world and enter a cloister; rather to bring to the tasks and problems of every day the singleness of mind and will that will make of all life a ministry, a worship expressing itself in deed. The Protestant believes that every calling may be a priesthood, that all work may be holy, and that scientists and statesmen, housewives and farmers, teachers and bankers are called by God to be his saints as truly as monk or nun.

So the saints of Protestantism are to be found in the world doing their daily tasks, whatever they may be: statesmen like Lincoln, soldiers like Gordon, philanthropists like Shaftesbury, missionaries like Wesley, preachers like Phillips Brooks; but wherever they are found, they are living a life made possible through faith in God.

Protestants too know that detachment is necessary, an inner detachment which is all the more difficult because of the lack of outward helps such as are supplied by the rules of the Catholic orders. Selfish desires must be mastered, legitimate instincts must be sacrificed, so that the soul may dedicate itself to its primary task. Protestants like Catholics attain this

⁷ Pp. 96, 98 (New York, 1931).

detachment by means of contemplation and prayer. In the solitude of his room at night, or in the stillness of the early morning, the man who must act comes into touch with ultimate reality, and waits for the insight which will guide him on his way.

Many years ago the academic world was startled by the decision of Doctor Albert Schweitzer, the brilliant professor of theology in Strassburg, to abandon his professorship and move to Central Africa in order to work as a medical missionary for the victims of sleeping sickness in that desolate country. In his book, *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*,⁸ he tells us why he went.

It was the story of Dives and Lazarus which opened Schweitzer's eyes. This parable seemed to have been spoken directly to him. In wretched Lazarus he saw the colored folk "out there in the colonies . . . who suffer from illness and pain just as much as we do, nay much more, and have absolutely no means of fighting them," while he himself was Dives, who, through his scientific knowledge of the causes of disease and pain, had "innumerable means of fighting them." And just as Dives "sinned against the poor man at his gate because for want of thought he never put himself in his place and let his heart and conscience tell him what he ought to do, so do we sin against the poor man at our gate."⁹

The annals of foreign missions are full of such stories—the story of men like Judson or Carey or Livingstone or Paton—who turned their backs on

⁸ London, 1922.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 2.

all the world holds dear; who faced without flinching suffering of body and greater suffering of mind, yet who illustrated in signal degree the qualities of courage, decision, love, joy, which we have seen to be characteristic of the supernatural life.

But we have not come to the end of Schweitzer's experience of religion when we learn how it took him to Central Africa. He was a thinker as well as a lover of his kind, and he felt the need of relating what had happened to him to the wider life of his generation. On his return to civilization a few years later we find him lecturing on the decay and restoration of civilization, and diagnosing the evils from which his contemporaries are suffering as due to their lack of any consistent social philosophy.¹⁰ What this philosophy is to be in detail, he does not profess to be able to tell us. But he is sure of one thing. It must have love at its heart. Only through love can we enter into fellowship with God, and all our knowledge of God can be summed up in this: that we experience him within ourselves as the will to love. Without faith in the God who is love, Schweitzer sees no hope for European civilization.¹¹

Thus in helping the individual to be his true self religion serves society. It is religion's high office to separate men from the things that divide them from one another.

¹⁰ The future of civilization, he tells his hearers, depends on whether it is possible for thought to reach a theory of the universe which will have a more clear and fundamental hold on optimism and the ethical impulse than its predecessors have had. Cf. *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization*, English translation by Campion (London, 1932), p. 96.

¹¹ *Out of My Life and Thought* (New York, 1933), pp. 277 ff.

5. SECULAR SUBSTITUTES FOR THE SAINT

It will help us to appreciate how much society needs the saint if we consider some of the secular substitutes which have been proposed for him. They are not ignoble. Indeed, if we follow them, they will lead us very close to the place where the saint would have us go.

The first of these substitutes, and the most characteristically modern, is the scientist. He is in a very real sense the priest of the modern world, for through his control over aspects of nature before which the ordinary man is powerless he works miracles. The scientist is not only a man who gives us new insights into truth, but a man who brings new things to pass. He says, "Let there be light," and there is light. He bids the waters stand back, and they obey. He makes the winds his messengers, and he flies above the clouds.

But it is not in his capacity of practical helper that the scientist most commands our admiration. It is because of the type of character he illustrates. There is about him something simple, unselfish, outward-looking. He is not thinking about himself, but only about truth; and for truth's sake he will sacrifice everything.

Thus there is in the scientist's attitude a certain religious quality which brings him very near to the saint. He, too, knows what it means to be still in the presence of mystery and to risk all for the sake of some new insight.

In his often-quoted essay on "Mathematical Discovery," Professor Poincaré has described an experience of his own which could be reproduced in varying form by many other scientists. While stepping into a carriage to go for a drive, the solution of a mathematical problem which had baffled him for weeks was instantly revealed to him. "I made no verification," he says, "and had no time to do so, but I felt absolute certainty at once."¹² When he got back to his home, he verified the result at his leisure to satisfy his conscience.

Reflecting on this experience, Poincaré reaches the conclusion that what had happened to him could not be completely described in intellectual terms. What he had found was not simply truth, but beauty. In discovering mathematical law he had gained an insight into the harmony of the æsthetic and the useful and with the discovery he felt an exhilaration of spirit like the thrill which came to the Psalmist when in God he discovered the beauty of holiness.

In its ethical, as well as in its æsthetic, quality the scientific attitude approximates that of religion. Some months ago the papers reported the death of a young physician who at the very threshold of a scientific career of great promise discovered that he had become the victim of an incurable disease. "Despite positive knowledge that medical science could do nothing for him, he devoted his definitely numbered days to a systematic laboratory study of his own case and a detailed record of his symptoms and

¹² *Science and Method*, p. 53.

suffering. . . . Alone in a little room set aside for him in the Thorndike Memorial Laboratory at the Boston City Hospital, he summed up the results of his own case and on his deathbed, despite excruciating pain and denying himself the relief that only drugs could offer, he dictated the final observations of a physician on his most intimate patient in the hope that his record might add to the store of medical knowledge."¹³

Who would question that in this doctor we have an illustration of the same quality of victorious living which we have seen to be characteristic of the life of faith?

A second substitute for the saint is the philanthropist, understanding by this word the man who, confronted with the choice between living primarily for himself or for others, deliberately chooses the life of helpfulness and devotes all that he has of time, or money, or privilege, to alleviating human misery and fostering human welfare.

Of such philanthropists we have no lack. Some of them have accumulated great fortunes and made their wealth their servant rather than their master. Others have little to give but a loving spirit and a cheerful face. One of the best beloved of these lovers of their kind has only recently passed from us.¹⁴ Through a long life he gave freely to every good cause, and with his money he gave himself. Familiar through experience with the trials of an oppressed race, he made those who were suffering similar op-

¹³ *New York Times*, Dec. 6, 1932.

¹⁴ Mr. Julius Rosenwald.

pression the special objects of his benefaction. The Negro had no better friend in America than this large-hearted Jewish merchant and the tribute which was paid to him by his fellow-citizens at his death was the best testimony to the esteem in which he was held.

But what gave this particular giver his hold upon the affections of men was not so much what he gave as the spirit in which he gave it. Only the spirit that loves and understands can make a man a philanthropist in the true sense of that great word—a lover of his kind—and with this spirit we approach very near to the genius of sainthood.

One more substitute deserves mention in a word, though it is difficult to find the right word by which to describe it. Perhaps "statesman" comes as near as any. By this I mean the man who has a genius for social organization, who brings to the complex problems and tasks of men in society the same combination of insight and sympathy which distinguishes the philanthropist in his dealings with individuals.

The statesman in this sense need not be a politician. He may be a manufacturer, or a banker, or a labor leader, or hold any other position in which the leadership of men is involved. The important thing is that he should have the ability to see what ought to be done and the spirit to do it in the right way.

In a meeting held in London some months after the death of the late Senator Dwight Morrow, a number of his associates, many of them eminent in politics and finance, were recalling the qualities in

their friend which had specially endeared him to them. Among the tributes paid, I find these revealing sentences spoken by one whom those who knew him best had found most reticent, but who, on this occasion, opened a window into a side of his life which had been a secret to most of those who heard him.

"It was not what he did," said this friend of Mr. Morrow, "that endeared him to me, but what he was. It was not because he was clever or far-sighted, or imaginative, or any of those qualities which had been mentioned this afternoon—it was that he made me feel that these qualities were mine, and not his. As I listened to him and talked to him, I could not but be conscious each time that he lifted me from the dull and unimaginative way in which I was accustomed to approach many of the subjects we discussed, and brought me, as it were, to the level which so far I believed he and he only could occupy."¹⁵

That is what the true saint does. He reveals to us in ourselves the man we know we ought to be, and he helps us to make that man real.¹⁶

Thus in every selfless devotion, whether it be to truth or to duty, there is, as Baron von Hügel reminds us,¹⁷ something which is of the essence of religion. And these substitutes for the saint to which

¹⁵ From a report privately printed for the friends of Senator Morrow.

¹⁶ In a memorial service for the late Archbishop Söderblom, Dr. Sandegren quoted this definition of sainthood as a favorite of the Archbishop: "A saint is one who by his life on earth makes it easier to believe that there is a God, and to wish to draw near to him."

¹⁷ von Hügel, F., *Selected Letters* (1896-1924), edited by B. Holland (London, 1927), pp. 71-73.

we have pointed prove on closer inspection to be only saints in the making or in disguise.

6. WHY THE SAINTHOOD OF THE FEW IS NOT ENOUGH

To sum up. What differentiates the saintly life from the life of convention is the completeness of its devotion to the highest that is known. And society needs the saint most of all because he makes it evident that even within the limits of our mortal life such devotion is possible.

It is not only to those of exceptional talent or great responsibility that the call to sainthood comes. It comes also to very simple people as an appeal for fidelity to the day's work, or the opportunity to render some needed friendly service. The saint need not be a leader; he may be a follower as well. Indeed what would the leader be without followers? Only twelve out of all the men and women who knew Jesus while he was on earth were called to be Apostles, but without the hundreds who reassembled in Galilee after the resurrection, and the thousands who were added after Peter's sermon at Pentecost, what would the witness of the twelve have availed? It is not the exceptional spirit alone but every Christian, if we are to believe the Apostle, who is called to sainthood.

In his recent book, *Recovery*,¹⁸ Sir Arthur Salter analyzes the evils from which society is suffering and shows that in every case they have a moral root. Men

¹⁸ London, 1932.

who are bound to one another by indissoluble ties of industry and finance are trying to live as if they were independent units. Each nation tries to be a law unto itself, and, within each nation, there are competing social groups. Only when the threat of some great danger for the moment pushes lesser rivalries into the background and leads the citizens of a single nation to act as one, is unity even measurably realized. On the larger sphere of international relationships unity is still only an aspiration.

It is not for lack of knowledge that we act as we do, for the disastrous effects of our present rivalries have been explained again and again. Sir Arthur Salter's book is only the latest of a numerous company which have diagnosed our present situation and pointed out a remedy. But the remedy is not applied because the spirit to apply it is lacking. What is necessary in society is what is necessary in the individual—a moral transformation—a conversion that will banish fear and substitute the will to serve for the will to rule.

Sir Arthur Salter has summed it all up in the closing words of his book when he says:

"We are, if we could but grapple with our fate, the most fortunate of the generations of men. In a single lifetime science has given us more power over nature, and extended further the range of vision of the exploring mind, than in all recorded history. Now, and now only, our material resources, technical knowledge and industrial skill, are enough to afford to every man of the world's teeming population physical comfort, adequate leisure and access to everything in our rich heritage of civilization, that he has the personal quality to enjoy. We need but the regulative wisdom to con-

trol our specialized activities and the thrusting energy of our sectional and selfish interests. To face the troubles that beset us, this apprehensive and defensive world needs now above all the qualities it seems for the moment to have abandoned—courage and magnanimity.”

This is the call that comes to every one of us. The issues at stake are so serious, and the penalties of failure are so terrible, that the few, however earnest, cannot ward off the danger in which the heedlessness or the selfishness of the many threaten to involve mankind. More even than we want the intellectual leadership of scientists or statesmen, we want the simple human qualities of courage, trust, and love. To the plain people in our churches and outside the church comes the summons today as truly as in the first century, or the fifth, or the sixteenth, to be in earnest about religion. We too are called to be saints.

CHAPTER XIV

HELPS IN THE CULTIVATION OF THE SAINTLY LIFE

1. The Way of Contemplation and the Way of Activity.
2. Bible and Church as Helps in the Cultivation of the Saintly Life.
3. The Church Within and Beyond the Churches.
4. Where Science Must Help.
5. How to Measure Progress.

1. THE WAY OF CONTEMPLATION AND THE WAY OF ACTIVITY

Let us suppose the initial step taken. We have made the great surrender and entered upon the path whose goal is complete holiness. What must we do to reach this goal?

We have seen that from time immemorial the surrendered spirit has found two ways in which to practice the presence of God. Prayer is the first and most characteristic of these ways.¹

There is a well-known sermon by Sir George Adam Smith in which he combats the familiar notion that prayer is a preparation for the battle of life. Prayer, he tells us, is not preparation for battle. It is itself the battle. In the spirit of man all the hardest conflicts are joined and won. And when victory has been achieved within, all that follows is comparatively easy.

There is a great truth here; but it is not all the truth. For in the deepest sense prayer is not conflict. It is the peace that comes when conflict is over. How can I bend my will to the will of God? My will is the one thing I cannot bend. It must go where my desire points or it will make my life a lie. If my will is to be one with God, God must himself possess my will

¹ Cf. Brown, W. Adams, *The Life of Prayer in a World of Science* (New York, 1928).

and grant me the desire that will make him mine.

Those who have advanced the furthest in the religious life have seen this most clearly. They know they have nothing to give which they have not first received. The faith which makes them one with God is his gift. Even Jesus is reported by the Fourth Evangelist to have said, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing."²

If then we would understand the life of prayer, it is not by striving that we shall learn its secret. We must be still and know that God is God. There will come a time for activity when every nerve must be strained to the uttermost, but it will be later on. We must first be content to wait till the inward summons is received, so that when it comes there may be no obstacle to block the way.

That is why it is so important to make provision for times of quiet in the religious life; times when, free from the distraction of competing interests, we may fix our attention on the things that matter most, and revitalize our spirits through communion with the highest.

More important even than the setting apart of definite hours of quiet is the cultivation of the habit of mind in which we see all that happens in its larger context and test each new experience by standards that outlast the changes of time. So conceived, prayer may become an attitude rather than a series of acts; an attitude that will express itself in act, when the occasion makes action possible, but which

² John 5:19.

continues as an undercurrent of feeling, keeping the spirit fresh and the mind clear.³

But contemplation alone does not go far enough. Action must follow insight, since it is in action that the sincerity of our devotion is put to the proof. So through all the centuries the church has found the final test of sainthood in the deeds the saints have done—their acts of faith and hope and love. It was when Francis approached the leper that he passed from doubt to certainty. It was when Bushnell dedicated himself to the divinest thing he knew, that he found release of spirit.

In the life of the spirit we will then expect to find alternation.⁴ Now the contemplative life will take the precedence, now the life of activity. There will be times when it must be our chief effort to resist competing interests that tempt us from our supreme allegiance and there will be times when the enthusiasm of service will carry us unheeding over every obstacle. No experience is alien to him who is living the life of faith and no situation in which he finds himself but may minister to its enrichment.

Yet both in its inner and outer aspects the life of faith is often one of loneliness. The more one learns of the ideal to which God invites, the less one can be satisfied with the standards accepted today. And he

³ Catholics make much of this habitual practice of prayer. They distinguish from vocal prayer, in which words are used, and even meditation, which employs the forms of discursive thought, the prayer of quiet in which the spirit ranges freely through the universe of God.

⁴ Cf. Hocking, W. E., *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* (New Haven, 1912), pp. 405 sq.

who turns his back upon conventional ideas in order to enter upon a higher life, must expect to find himself increasingly a stranger. The experience of the first disciples who tried to interpret to their contemporaries their communion with the risen Jesus, repeats itself when earnest spirits of our own day try to tell others of their life in God.

To one's past self also one must be content to become a stranger. If we make the experience of the moment our standard for the future it is almost inevitable that we shall externalize it, and it will become a barrier against further progress. But the one thing of which we can be most certain is that no present attainment in the life of faith can measure future possibilities. Always our faces must be turned forward in confident expectation of better things to come. Each new step that we take into the strange new country means not only that we must say good-bye to some familiar and well-loved scene but that we must part with some accepted and well-tried standard. In this deepest of all senses Bunyan's description of the religious life is true. It is a pilgrim's progress. We walk by faith and not by sight and as we move from the known to the unknown, in our judgments and in our friendships, we shall find ourselves often alone. This withdrawal from men, even from the self of yesterday, in order to be alone with God is the soul's Gethsemane. Not till we have learned in our solitude to say with complete sincerity: "Not my will but thine be done," shall we be fit for the divine fellowship which the saints enjoy.

2. BIBLE AND CHURCH AS HELPS IN THE CULTIVATION OF THE SAINTLY LIFE

Among the helps that prepare us to take our place in this blessed fellowship, two hold for Christians a position of pre-eminent importance: the Bible and the church. The Bible gathers up in compact and permanent form the central message of the Founder and of his first disciples, and preserves it for the instruction of future generations; as the classic of the Christian religion it is our most available help for the cultivation of the contemplative life. The church not only tells us what Christians have done in the past, it is the society through which they function in the present; it is the indispensable agency for the practice of the active religious life.

To those who stand in the Protestant tradition, it is natural to think of the Bible as in a peculiar sense *the* revelation of God, and indeed it is difficult to over-estimate its importance. It is through the Bible that we have our most direct contact with the Founder of our religion. It is from the Bible that we learn to know the springs at which his religious life was fed. The Bible helps us to retrace the steps by which God prepared the way for his coming. From the Bible we learn of the transforming influence of Jesus upon the lives of the first disciples. Its pages record the witness of the disciples to him who was the way, the truth, and the life. When the life of the church has grown corrupt and her witness has become obscured, it has been the Bible which has been

the source of new light and of purifying influences.

Nevertheless, seen in the large perspective of history, the witness of the church is both earlier and more comprehensive. Before there was a Christian Bible, there was a Christian church. In the company that gathered in the upper room in the days that followed Easter, to share with one another the good news that the Master men thought dead was alive, the Christian church had its birth. As the years passed and the men who had known Jesus in the flesh grew fewer, it was the church which preserved with reverent care the memories we call our Gospels, and associated with them the letters of the first missionaries so as to form the nucleus of our New Testament. If the Bible, through its first-hand witness to Jesus, must always set the standard for the church, it is equally true that it was the church's reverence and love for Jesus which gave us the Bible. And to-day it is still the church which, by the lips of living men and by the silent language of sacramental act, interprets the first Christian message to successive generations.

It is to the Bible and to the church, then, that we must chiefly turn for guidance, in our effort to make progress in personal religion. But to use them rightly, we must know for what they are designed and what they can do for us.

One thing they cannot do for us. They cannot relieve us of the responsibility of making our own decisions. Protestants have learned that this is true of the church. It is important that we should realize

that it is no less true of the Bible. The Bible is a book of insights and it brings us in classical language the messages which some of the greatest men have received from God. But their revelations cannot take the place of our own.

Still less can the Bible take the place of other sources of knowledge. The Bible deals with scientific questions but it is not a scientific textbook. It tells the life-story of men and of nations but it is not an historical treatise. It records great philosophical insights but it is not a book of philosophy. The Bible is a book of religion, and by this we mean that it is a book which tells how men have found God and what they have found in him. It is the record of the revelations which have come to men who have sought for a message from God, have received what they sought and have been transfigured by it.

We misuse the Bible, therefore, if we use it for any other purpose than to help us to see how men have found the Divine and how they have been changed. It is one of the tragedies of human history that in their effort to find answers in the Bible which are not there, men have not only turned aside from the natural sources which furnish such knowledge but have missed the unique and perennial help which the Bible is fitted to give. In trying to make of the Bible a book lifted out of time, they have lost the sense of that in the Bible which makes it a book for all time.

Let us not fear therefore to take over all that modern critical scholarship can tell us of the origin

and history of the Bible, but let us not confine ourselves to what the scholars can tell us. The Bible is indeed a human book, one of the most human of books, but it is not for that reason less divine. As the record of the transformations wrought by God in the lives of men like ourselves, it is our most notable witness to the reality of the supernatural, and our most important single help for the cultivation of the life of faith in ourselves.

We have seen that the supernatural makes its presence most unmistakably felt in personality. The Bible is before all things a book of biography. What a strange company is brought before us: a wandering Bedouin pushing out from his father's home in distant Chaldea to find more spacious pasturage for his increasing flocks; a slave boy in Egypt who has become a prince's favorite, leaving his sheltered home to risk exile and warfare with his people; a country lad called from a shepherd's tasks to defend his nation and to mount the throne; a persecuting Pharisee changed by the vision of the risen Christ into a missionary of the faith he had opposed—these are but a few in the long gallery of portraits that the Bible presents to us, and of this strange and varied company there is not one who has not had an inner experience which makes him akin to all the others and to us.

What the Bible tells us of men's experiences of God in the past is reinforced by the present witness of the church. The church makes us acquainted with those who are living the life of faith now, and so in

many ways multiplies our opportunities for contacts with the divine.

It is in worship that the life of faith finds its most direct and natural expression; and of all the services the church can render, incomparably the greatest is as the guide and inspirer of worship. The church holds in trust the treasures of the worship of the past. In its hymns the aspirations of the greatest religious geniuses of the race find classical expression. Through its sacraments it makes God's grace real to even the simplest believer. Through the sermon, its preachers interpret the message of the Bible in the language of today. In its liturgy the common needs and longings come to worthy speech. "Of all the services which man can render to man," President Eliot of Harvard is reported to have said, "that of the poet is greatest, save one, that of the man who can lift the thoughts of his fellows to God in public prayer." This incomparable service is the prerogative of the church.

The church can further help us by enlarging our fellowship. The interest of most of us is centred in the community in which we live, or in our profession, our class or our country. Without the existence of a universal society like the church, it is difficult to see how we could ever rise above these limitations. Even as it is they are constantly warring against the essential catholicity of the church and trying to cramp it within national or denominational lines. But the attempt is never wholly successful. The hymns we sing and the prayers we pray remind

us of our membership in the great company which no man can number.

The church can help us by directing our efforts at self-discipline. This is a service more effectively rendered in some branches of the church than in others. In Rome it has been developed to the highest degree, and to a lesser extent in the Anglo-Catholic section of the Anglican and Episcopal churches. In these communions the priest is a director of conscience and possesses in the confessional an instrument which makes this direction effective. In reacting against the abuses of the confessional, many Protestants have neglected the disciplinary function of the church and so have lost one great opportunity of helpfulness. For surely there can be no greater service to any one who has entered upon the quest of the perfect life than to put at his service methods which have already been found helpful. We may confidently expect therefore that the present neglect of discipline in Protestantism will prove only temporary and that in due time the church will reassume, in ways appropriate to its genius, this essential function.⁵

⁵ One of the sources of strength of the First Century Christian Fellowship is that in the principle of sharing it has devised a substitute for the confessional. By the invitation to confess one's sins in public the individual is led to self-examination, while by the habit of talking over with members of the group the guidance which has been received in privacy, a needed check is given to the possibility of individual mistake.

It must be remembered, however, that by the emphasis given to public confession one essential safeguard of the Catholic confessional is surrendered, and the convert is exposed to serious dangers of insincerity and exhibitionism.

That reticence need not be inconsistent with effective personal

Finally, the church can help us in the cultivation of the life of faith by opening to us many opportunities for the expression of the life of love. The church is not only a company of worshippers but also of workers, and through its many institutions of helpfulness and service, provides limitless opportunities for the practice of the good life.

We are so familiar with this service of the church that it is hard for us to appreciate how strange a thing it is. All over the world—in India, in China, in Africa, in the islands of the sea—we find men and women carrying on a ministry of love; not to those of their own nation and race merely, but to the suffering and disinherited of all races and of all classes. We find hospitals and schools, orphanages and asylums, and, when we ask who put them there, we shall be told that it was Christian missionaries who have taken this way of sharing with others the love which Christ had first showed toward them.

witness is shown by the experience of Henry Drummond. Drummond was one of the most successful evangelists of his day, and his influence over great bodies of students was phenomenal. Drummond's biographer, Sir George Adam Smith, thus describes the impression which he made upon those who knew him best:

"The longer you knew him the fact which most impressed you was that he seldom talked about himself and no matter how deep the talk might go never about that inner self which for praise or for sympathy is in many men so clamant and in all more or less perceptible. Through the radiance of his presence and the familiarity of his talk there sometimes stole upon those who were becoming his friends the sense of a great loneliness and silence behind as when you catch a snowpeak across the summer fragrance and music of a Swiss meadow, for he always kept silence concerning his own religious struggles. He never asked even his most intimate friends for sympathy nor seemed to carry any wound however slight that needed their fingers for its healing."—*Life of Henry Drummond* (New York, 1898), p. 4.

"What first interested you in Christianity?" I once asked an old boatman in the flood district of Central China. "It was seeing the Christian doctors going about their work," he answered. "I could not imagine why they did it."

It is no answer to say that we also find hospitals and schools carried on by people who have no conscious religious motive. That is not a sign of the failure of religion, but of its success. Religion set the example which others are now following, and the fact that today philanthropy has become the fashion even in secular circles, is the best proof that there is something in the gospel of a God who loves to which the heart of man responds.

3. THE CHURCH WITHIN AND BEYOND THE CHURCHES

It is not strange that having a consciousness of such great gifts to impart, those who have been responsible for the government of the church should sometimes have overlooked the moral and spiritual conditions through which divine self-communication must take place and have claimed for the institutions of religion, at the particular stage which they have reached in their development, a character as eternal as that of God himself. Catholics, Roman or Anglican, often attribute to the sacraments a divine efficacy independent of the character of the ministrant, and teach that they impart God's grace *ex opere operato*, or in other words by the very fact that they have been performed. One may sympathize with

the motive which leads to this claim, which is a desire to free man's contact with God from any taint of human imperfection and uncertainty, and yet recognize that through such a procedure the door is opened to many superstitions and abuses.

Protestants have been very sensitive to this abuse on the part of Catholics and have rightly protested against it. They have not always realized that in their doctrine of an inerrant Bible, they have themselves often been guilty of a similar mistake. We should be thankful, therefore, that when superstition has shown itself in the church, either in connection with Bible or with sacrament, there have been courageous spirits who have dared to make a protest, even if it involved a breach with institutional religion. The church owes much to these "heretics," its own children, who, for love of the better church of tomorrow have dared to break with the church of today. Such advance guards bear witness to the fact that the true church, the church of which the New Testament speaks, and which St. Paul calls the body of Christ, is not to be completely identified with any ecclesiastical organization, however venerable, but is to be found both within and beyond the churches in "the company of faithful people" who are trusting God and living the life of faith. It is in these faithful souls wherever they are found, in the Roman Church or in the Protestant, or among men who, never having heard of the historic Christ, live true to the best light they have, that the supernatural most clearly makes its presence felt. In them God manifests his

continuing influence as the Lord and Giver of life.⁶

But our grateful recognition of the indispensable service rendered by the brave men who for conscience' sake protest against the evils of institutional religion,

⁶ Among recent religious books is a brief volume of meditations by J. H. Oldham entitled *A Devotional Diary*. As the name indicates, it is a book of readings designed for daily devotional use. At the head of each page is a passage, or passages, from the Bible. Then follow a group of extracts in prose or verse which illustrate some aspect of the central theme. The page concludes with a brief prayer which translates the thought which has been the theme of meditation into the language of personal devotion.

The extracts are from authors of all kinds, poets and essayists, historians and biographers. Only a few are from men who are technical scholars in the field of religion. What the author has taken, he tells us, he has gleaned from the books that have been his companions in the course of his ordinary duties and recreation.

Yet it is here, in the common experience of men as they have lived their daily life, that he has found his commentary on the great words of Scripture that furnish his central theme, and it is from this that he draws the motives which lead him over into the life of prayer.

It is a parable of the life of faith. We meet it first in the rare spirits in whom it flowers into sainthood. When we have found it in them our eyes are opened to see it elsewhere—and, behold, wherever man awakes to his true self it is to be found.

Cf. Horton, Walter M., *A Psychological Approach to Theology* (New York, 1931), pp. 209-210.

"One of the most impressive religious experiences I have ever had," writes Professor Horton, "came to me, not in church, but—shades of my Puritan ancestors, avert your faces!—in a New York theatre, where John Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln* was then playing. As scene succeeded scene, and the soul of Lincoln was more and more completely revealed—triumphing over his own misgivings, forsaking ease for the sake of the well-being of all, unflinching in his opposition to evil, but overcoming evil with compassion, giving his life at length as a ransom for many—I found myself at last looking upon the stage with the eyes of a worshipper, and I said to myself: '*This, this is God.*' Nor was I a solitary worshipper. Consciously or unconsciously, each person there worshipped God that evening. I felt it in the applause, and in the still more significant silences; and the fellowship of adoration added greatly to the depth of it for all of us; for it helped us to feel that this was not merely *my* God but *our* God—yes, the God of all mankind."

should never blind us to the immense services rendered to humanity by the organized church.

Not the least of the reasons, I am convinced, why so much of our contemporary life has lost its dignity and interest, is because men have tried to dispense with the services of the church. And the most unwise thing that the church can do in the extreme need of the present moment is to conform its practice to the model of the secular life. Not by its likeness to the common life, but by its unlikeness, will the church regain its former power.

For that which gives the life of faith its perennial appeal is that it satisfies needs native to man which can be satisfied in no other way. The church will again fulfil its high function in the life of men when it unceasingly reminds them that the good life is the heroic life, and that the call to this life and the resources which make it possible come from above, from the Father of Lights, whose leading alone can guide us through the encompassing mystery.

4. WHERE SCIENCE MUST HELP

It is to Bible and church then that we must turn for our most direct and immediate help in the cultivation of the saintly life. But we must use these helps in the right way. There is no greater error of which we can be guilty than to attempt to reproduce in our own day the conditions which obtained in the lives of the men of whom the Bible tells us—to make Paul's experience the model of every conversion; to imitate

the disciples' first experiment in communism as for a few brief years they had all things in common; to use Jesus' works of healing as an excuse for dispensing with the help that modern medicine can give; to base our faith in the reality of the life after death upon our ability to prove that Jesus' physical body was resuscitated after death and the laws of matter for the moment abrogated by his miraculous appearances. The supernatural, I repeat, is not given us as an escape from nature, but as the clue to its real meaning and uses; and revelation is not a substitute for science, but the sign-post that points the direction in which science has further to search.

This warning is especially necessary in connection with the much-discussed question of nature miracles. Protestants as we have seen have not denied the occurrence of such miracles but have restricted their occurrence to Biblical times, and given them purely apologetic significance, whereas Catholics believe that they are normal ways of God's working and indeed base upon the fact of their occurrence their most convincing proof of the right of the saints to a position of special honor. As between the Catholic and the Protestant position at this point the truth is obviously on the Catholic side. If God is present in nature at all it cannot be as an occasional visitor. Today as truly as in the days of Jesus we must be able to detect his presence in acts that appeal to sense. The difficulty with physical miracle begins only when it is defined in terms that close the door to scientific investigation. The question what God

says to us in physical miracle and the question of the method through which he speaks are two quite different questions. It is with the first of these only that religion is concerned, and it may safely leave to science to carry its study of the second as far as it may.⁷

One point at which the control of spirit over body appears most clearly is in connection with the cure of disease. The New Testament makes much of Christ's miracles of healing and similar accounts appear in the sacred books of other religions. To Catholic piety such healings are of frequent occurrence and take place most commonly at the shrine of some saint and, as it is believed, as a result of the saint's intercession.

The example most familiar to Protestants is associated with the Grotto of Our Lady at Lourdes, where diseases which have persisted for years, and have resisted the efforts of the most experienced physicians,

⁷ The older conception of physical miracle rested, as we have seen, on a dualistic philosophy which contemporary thought has largely outgrown. It is not so easy for us today as once it seemed, to tell where the physical stops and the spiritual begins. More than one recent writer on the supernatural, therefore, in his emphasis upon the continuity of the miraculous, is disposed to adopt a respectful attitude to the so-called nature miracles. Thus Professor Taylor, in his recent Gifford Lectures, reminds us that the sharp line which the older apologists drew between nature miracles and spiritual experiences like conversion is difficult to maintain on the basis of our contemporary scientific knowledge of the relation of mind and body. It is illogical, Professor Taylor writes, to admit "the presence in the historical world process of the intrusive, abrupt, and discontinuous in the form of what we call a miracle of genius or a moral miracle" and to deny that a similar discontinuity is possible in the realm we call physical. Indeed, what is the meaning of a phrase like "emergent evolution," but the admission that even in the purely physical field we are confronted with phenomena which are of a piece with what the older apologists call miracles? (*The Faith of a Moral-ist* (London, 1930), Vol. II, p. 174).

have been cured in an atmosphere of prayer and, as the faithful believe, as its direct result. It is not for the layman to decide how far these healings extend and in what manner they have been brought about; still less to raise the difficult question of their relation to natural law. It is enough to say that physicians of the highest standing have assured me that they have been convinced by the records of what has happened at Lourdes of possibilities of healing in regions beyond that which has hitherto been believed possible in the theories of contemporary orthodox medicine.

The attitude of the doctors on this point has been undergoing a significant change. They recognize, more fully than their predecessors of a generation ago, the power of the human spirit over disease. Many of them are ready to admit that religion may make notable contributions to inward serenity and peace, and, in so doing, may render a service of which physicians will be wise to make use. It is not uncommon, therefore, to find doctors associating themselves with clergymen for common study of the relation of religion to health.

Such association is all to the good. But it is important to keep clearly in mind what we may hope from such studies and what we ought not to expect. We may take it for granted that where religious faith is present, whether on the part of the healer or of the patient, or both, results often follow which would not otherwise occur or not to the same extent. But it does not follow that such results are wholly incommen-

surate with those which are reached by ordinary medical procedure or by the normal influence of spirit on spirit, as friend shares with friend his larger faith and fuller hope. To religious faith all natural processes are, in the last analysis, divine, and too exclusive reliance upon exceptional methods may lead to neglect of more common and easily accessible means. What matters is that we should set no limits to God's power to help, and using such measures as he has put at our disposal, should thankfully accept the result as his gift.

A similar warning is needed in connection with the possibility of communication between the living and the dead. That such communication is a fact, many religious people believe. More than this, many of them believe that they have had evidence of this fact in personal experiences of their own. Among Protestants, such communication is ordinarily restricted to Jesus, who, as the living Christ, brings to his disciples, in the hour of need, his message of forgiveness and renewal. The testimony of Stanley Jones in his *Christ of the Indian Road*⁸ will occur to many readers, but it is only one of many similar experiences.

"It was during my first night in France," writes Canon Raven, "on my way to Vimy Ridge . . . that [Jesus] vindicated for me my hope that when everything else failed he would stand sure. I am perhaps physically and certainly morally a coward . . . and when death looked me in the face, my manhood with-

⁸ Pp. 24-25 (New York, 1925).

ered and collapsed. For what seemed hours I was in an agony of fear. Men talk of honor and a flag—I would have foresworn any earthly loyalty for the bare gift of life; or of immortality when one yearns for the dear small familiar things of earth, and the clutch of a baby's fingers on one's hand, and the smile in a woman's eyes; or of sacrifice and heroism, fine themes for talk, but poor consolation if all one's dreams are to end in a shattered pulp of blood and brain; or of God—and suddenly as if spoken in the very room his words, 'For their sakes I consecrate myself,' and the fragrant splendor of his presence.

"I was overwrought, no doubt. The day had been too great a strain. . . . Maybe the visualizing of the Lord was due to my mental state; maybe the words were my own rendering of his impact; but for the next nine months he was never absent, and I never alone, and never save for an instant or two broken by fear. If he who was with me when I was blown up by a shell, and gassed, and sniped at, with me in hours of bombardment and the daily walk of death, was an illusion, then all that makes life worth living for me is illusion too; and I can only thank God that in this mockery of existence there has been a dream so beautiful, so realistic, so potent in its effects."⁹

What Protestants confine to Jesus, Catholics extend to his followers who have passed into the unseen world. It is not only the living Christ who makes his

⁹ Charles E. Raven, *A Wanderer's Way* (London, 1928), pp. 156, 157.

presence known to his disciples, but the saints who, because of their fidelity and heroism, have been admitted to his fellowship. From their heavenly home they still see what goes on on earth and are the source of innumerable benefits to those who turn to them for help. Thus to the Catholic the range of human fellowship is enlarged. The communion of saints in which he believes, outlasts death and unites those who are now living with those who have gone before in unbroken fellowship.

In secular circles this faith in the possibility of communion between the living and the dead was long dismissed as superstition. With the growth of psychological research, however, it has become a subject of increasing interest and has won not a few notable converts. Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle may not be regarded as having proved their case; at least they have changed the attitude in which it is regarded.

But here again we must bear in mind the distinction already drawn between what science can prove and what faith must accept. It is quite conceivable, however unlikely it may now appear, that scientists, by the use of methods similar to those which they now employ, may succeed in demonstrating the fact of continued life after death, and even of the occurrence of communication between the living and the dead. But this of itself would have no necessary religious significance. It is only as we learn what the life after death is like and that it is a life worth living, that immortality becomes an object of religious

faith. And this we can learn as well here, by the discovery in ourselves and in others, of qualities which make life so worth living that it deserves to continue indefinitely. It was not simply because Jesus appeared to his disciples after death that the Easter message brings perennial comfort and hope, but because of the manner of person who appeared. It is the fact that Jesus was what he was and has done what he has done, that is our surest ground of faith in immortality.

It is through its willingness to test its faith by experiment¹⁰ that religion has its closest point of contact with science. Through experiment scientists translate their faith into knowledge through appropriate action. Back of every scientific experiment is an act of faith; faith in the existence of a real world with laws that make prediction possible; faith that these laws can be known by man; faith that the way to learn what they can teach us is to follow to the uttermost the best insight that has been given us up to date. We call the insights of science hypotheses.¹¹

¹⁰ The use of the word experiment to describe the progressive appropriation of God's self-manifestation to the individual may seem to introduce into the religious life an element of uncertainty, inconsistent with the inevitableness and finality of God's gift of himself. But such an attitude rests upon a misconception of the nature of the experiments in which we engage in religion. Their purpose is not to determine whether there be a God or even to justify our faith that the revelation we believe ourselves to have received is from him; rather to learn more fully what this revelation means for us and what consequences will follow our obedience to its summons. Experiments of this kind are of the very essence of the religious life, for it is only through such experiments that we can grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God.

¹¹ On the place of hypothesis in religious experiment cf. Brown, W. Adams, *Pathways to Certainty* (New York, 1931).

They sum up what scientists believe enough to act upon their beliefs. From this action two results follow: for one thing a clarification or correction of the original insight; for another, the enlargement of man's power to use the gifts which nature brings.

The experiments of religion have a like office. They help to clear away misconceptions about God. They increase our capacity to realize God's ideal for us. For God who is life and the Giver of life is always pointing us forward and the only way we can fully understand his will for us is by doing what he directs.

Yet with all similarity, there remains this fundamental difference between the experiments of science and those of religion, that in religion a personal factor is involved which is absent in science. Science, as we have seen, is concerned primarily with the uniformities of nature, and novelty interests the scientist only as the first example of a recurrent series. But it is precisely with the individual and in so far forth with the unique that religion is concerned. In religion God's care for each individual of all his human children comes to clearest expression and it is in the life of the individual therefore that the experiments of religion must take place.

5. HOW TO MEASURE PROGRESS

We need other standards than by which to measure progress in religion than the general standards with which science is content; such tests as consistency,

permanence, and social verification. These tests have their place in religion and in its own way religion makes use of them.¹² But it requires tests of a different kind by which to measure the peculiar gifts and virtues which it is its primary function to produce; tests which, unlike the more objective tests of science, do not ignore judgments of value but, on the contrary, carry them to their extremest limit. The devotional manuals give lists of graces which go to the making of Christian character and which together set the ideal after which we should strive. Some of these are familiar human virtues like wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage, known and practised for centuries before Jesus lived, yet taken over by his disciples and given a new and profounder meaning. Others are distinctively religious graces like Paul's famous trinity: faith, hope, love. The

¹² The use of these tests can be illustrated both in connection with the problems of our own individual spiritual life or with those which grow out of our relations with one another in society. In each case we need to check our first impression by the test of later insight and to confirm what seems true to us as individuals, by the longer experiences and riper wisdom of our predecessors and companions in the faith. With all recognition of the need for giving the individual experience free play, there is yet a core of truth in the old principle of St. Vincentius of Lerins: "That is true which has been held always, everywhere and by every one."

Thus in our estimate of our own personal experience of religion, we must be careful not to make our own type of experience the standard by which we judge others. In the joy we feel at the transformation faith has made possible in our life, it is easy to conclude that what has come to us as a surprise must be equally strange to our neighbors, and to be restless unless we can bring them to the place where we are. We need to remember that God has his own way of dealing with each soul. The first step in the successful sharing of religious experience, therefore, must be reverent exploration of what God has already done for the one we would help. It may be that in the course of this exploration we shall discover that

New Testament gives us more than one such list.¹³ Humility is a constantly recurring note, and sympathy; humility toward God as we face our present imperfections; sympathy with men in the knowledge that God, who cares for them more than we, is dealing with them in his own way. Jesus carries this sympathy to its ultimate limit when he bids us love our enemies and pray for them who persecute and despitefully use us.

There is danger, however, that in thus listing the different Christian graces, we may lose sight of the unity of the religious ideal. We need some simpler and more accessible test—one less self-centred and more objective, and such a test is given us in the habit of thankfulness. For thankfulness expresses more completely than any other word, the attitude of the spirit that has found God and rejoices in his beauty, his righteousness, and his love. To recognize in every good that comes to us God's gift and to be grateful for it; to see in every experience the lead-

we have more to learn than to teach and, instead of being eager to tell what God has done for us, may be content to be still and listen to the story of what God has done for some one else. There is no surer proof that we have found God for ourselves than that we recognize his presence in those whose way of approach is very different from our own, and are thankful for the discovery.

So in our exploration of the social aspects of religion we need the broadest possible basis of comparison. It is easy to identify God's plan for the world with the type of social ideal which for the moment seems to some particular group most satisfying. It is easy, but it is also most dangerous. History is full of examples of apocalypses that have failed to come off. Yet all the time God has been building his kingdom in the hearts of men and the communion of saints is a fact that evidences itself in a fellowship which reaches across all creeds and unites men and women of goodwill in common worship and service.

¹³ Cf. Gal. 5:22, 23; Matt. 5:3-12.

ing of his hand and to accept it as from him; to face the mystery of evil in our own lives and in the life of the world in confident expectation that, though we cannot now see how, God is using even the sorrows and tragedies of life for our good; this is to have faith as the great heroes and prophets of religion have had faith. This is to enter into the communion of saints.

At Marseilles, perched on a high rock above the city and commanding an extensive view of the sea upon which many of its former worshippers have lost their lives, stands the Mariners' Church of Notre Dame. Entering, you will see upon the walls rows of little placards recording the thanks of some husband for the healing of his wife or of some mother for the recovery of her son. Central in the landscape stands the fortress of the Château d'If, frowning and gloomy, scene of Monte Cristo's fabled imprisonment and escape, a symbol of the barriers that shut men in to the hard realities of life. Yet here in the church all is bright and gay. One cannot read these simple records, each the story of some physical cure or some spiritual deliverance, without realizing what a liberating power over the life of man is exercised by religion.

Account for it how we will; let science, with its critical analysis, give its own explanation of the experiences that have befallen these simple worshippers; grant that the cures which they have attributed to God's special favor have had natural causes which modern medicine can discover and in a measure re-

produce; still something has happened in the hearts of these people that has transformed life and made individuals who, like Monte Cristo, were imprisoned by circumstance, feel once more glad and free. However it has come about, they are no longer alone in the universe. God has visited them and they are thankful.

In the catalogue of blessings with which Albert Schweitzer sums up his recent autobiography, he concludes with this as the greatest blessing of all—"that I recognize everything which I have experienced as happiness for what it is, and accept it as something for which I must bring God my offering of thanksgiving."¹⁴

On the night of the day in which Sir Donald Ross discovered the relation between malaria and the mosquito, he wrote these words:

This day relenting God
Hath placed within my hand
A wondrous thing; and God
Be praised. At His command.

Seeking His secret deeds
With tears and toiling breath,
I find thy cunning seeds,
O million-murdering death.

I know this little thing
A myriad men will save.
O Death, where is thy sting,
Thy victory, O Grave?¹⁵

¹⁴ *Aus meinem Leben und Denken*, p. 210 (English translation, *Out of My Life and Thought*, p. 282).

¹⁵ Quoted in *The Christian Century*, Oct. 5, 1932, p. 1222.

But we have a greater example still. In the words preserved by the evangelists Matthew and Luke, in which Jesus expresses his attitude toward life's ultimate mystery, we hear him saying, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."¹⁶

We end where we began with the fact of God. God is the great reality that gives to all lesser realities their meaning and their glory. God is at once Father and comrade, creator and teacher, redeemer and friend. God is the spring in which all enduring satisfactions have their source. God is the goal to which all high endeavor is directed. In his fellowship, even if we have not yet fully attained it, we may find assurance and peace. God the all-beautiful, God the all-righteous, God the all-loving—life-giver and joy-giver—is at once the author of our being and the home of our souls.

¹⁶ Matt. 11:25, 26; Luke 10:21.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- I. GENERAL WORKS
- II. THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS
- III. THE SUPERNATURAL IN PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY
- IV. THE SUPERNATURAL IN ROMAN CATHOLICISM
- V. OLDER PROTESTANT VIEWS OF THE SUPERNATURAL
- VI. THE SUPERNATURAL IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE
 - A. THE ANGLO-CATHOLIC REVIVAL
 - B. THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH
 - C. OTHER CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES
 - D. HUMANIST SUBSTITUTES FOR THE SUPERNATURAL

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